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Allegiances

SUNCLAN

LEADER **Dawnstar**- Golden brown she-cat with green eyes

DEPUTY **Cinderflame**- Dark gray she-cat with amber eyes

MEDICINE CATS **Pebblestep**- Gray and white she-cat with blue eyes

Honeyfrost- Golden and white she-cat with blue eyes

WARRIORS *(toms and she-cats without kits)*

Redclaw- Dark ginger tom with amber eyes

Adderstrike- Silver tom with lighter tabby markings and dark blue eyes

Lionclaw- Golden tom with amber eyes and abnormally large claws

Goldenleaf- Golden she-cat with green eyes

Fawnheart- Light brown she-cat with lighter spots on her flank and pale green eyes

Turtleblaze- Mottled brown tom with green eyes

Yarrowtail- Fluffy, pale gray tom with pale green eyes

Flamepetal- Ginger she-cat with green eyes

Brackenpelt- Dark ginger tom with amber eyes
Apprentice, Maplepaw

Cloudspots- Fluffy gray and white tom with blue eyes
Apprentice, Burnpaw

Rosewind - Ginger she-cat with a white tipped tail and green eyes
Apprentice, Hollypaw

Cherryleaf- Tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes

Briarrose - Small brown she-cat with amber eyes

Earthpelt- Brown she-cat with white chest and paws with green eyes
Apprentice, Owlpaw

Mudfall- Dark gray tom with green eyes
Apprentice, Blossompaw

Flashtail- White tom with green eyes
Apprentice, Snowpaw

Falconheart- Golden Brown tabby tom with amber eyes
Apprentice, Bluepaw

Larkthorn- Dark brown she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Windpaw

Petalbreeze- Silver she-cat with white tipped ears and blue eyes
Apprentice, Bramblepaw

Hollystorm- Ginger she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Rushpaw

Burnclaw- Ginger tom with green eyes
Apprentice, Oakpaw

APPRENTICES *(more than six moons old, in training to become warriors)*

Bluepaw - Blue-gray she-cat with green eyes (Cherryleaf and Cloudspots's daughter)

Windpaw - Silver she-cat with blue eyes (Cherryleaf and Cloudspots's daughter)

Snowpaw - White she-cat with blue eyes (Cherryleaf and

Cloudspots's daughter)

Maplepaw - Mottled golden brown she-cat with green eyes (Fawnheart and Turtleblaze's daughter)

Bramblepaw - Brown and white tabby tom with amber eyes (Fawnheart and Turtleblaze's son)

Owlpaw - White and gray she-cat with blue eyes (Briarrose's and Yarrowtail's daughter)

Blossompaw - Tortoiseshell she-cat with amber eyes (Briarrose's and Yarrowtail's daughter)

Oakpaw - Brown tabby tom with green eyes (Briarrose's and Yarrowtail's son)

Rushpaw - Black tom with green eyes (Briarrose's and Yarrowtail's son)

QUEENS *(she-cats expecting or nursing kits)*

Squirreltail- Ginger she-cat with green eyes

Heatherflight- Light brown she-cat with green eyes

Sedgefern- Fluffy gray she-cat with green eyes, expecting Falconheart's kits

Dovepool- Silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes, expecting Mudfall's kits

ELDERS *(former warriors and queens, now retired)*

Sandfoot- Tortoiseshell she-cat with distinct ginger paws

Crowfur- Black she-cat with blue eyes

Rainears- Black she-cat with white ears and blue eyes

Icepetal- White she-cat with blue eyes

Snowtail- Fluffy white she-cat with blue eyes

ASHCLAN

LEADER Riverstar- Blue gray she-cat with blue eyes

DEPUTY Stormheart- Gray tom with dark green eyes

MEDICINE CAT Blackstorm - Black tom with blue eyes

WARRIORS

Harewhisker- Light brown tom

Silvermoon- Silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Haresong- Light brown she-cat with green eyes

Lilyclaw- Gray tabby she-cat with green eyes

Ravensong- Black tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Puddleclaw- Gray she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Otterpaw

Skyfeather- Silver tabby tom with black markings and amber eyes
Apprentice, Mistpaw

Nightheart - Black she-cat with white paws and yellow eyes

Leafdawn- Mottled brown she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Slatepaw

Dustfall- Pale brown tom with amber eyes

Rabbitspring- Pale brown and white she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Dewpaw

Hailstorm - Pale silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes
Apprentice, Russetpaw

Sageheart - Gray tabby she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Larchpaw

APPRENTICES

Slatepaw - Dark gray tom with amber eyes (Son of Silvermoon and Ashblaze)

Mistpaw - Gray she-cat with blue eyes (Daughter of Silvermoon and Ashblaze)

Dewpaw - Pale gray she-cat with blue eyes (Daughter of Silvermoon and Ashblaze)

Otterpaw - Brown tom with green eyes (Son of Primroseheart and Dustfall)

Russetpaw - Mottled ginger tom with amber eyes (Son of Primroseheart and Dustfall)

Larchpaw - Brown tom with green eyes (Son of Primroseheart and Dustfall)

ELDERS

Nightstorm- Dark gray tabby she-cat with green eyes

Crowstep- Gray tom with with black paws and amber eyes

Petalshine- Silver and white tabby she-cat

Foxfeather- Ginger tabby she-cat with green eyes

MOONCLAN

LEADER Shadowstar- Black tom with yellow eyes

DEPUTY Violetfur- Dark gray she-cat with bluish- purple eyes

MEDICINE CAT Oneflight- Silver tabby tom with icy blue eyes

WARRIORS
Shadeflower-Black and gray she-cat with amber eyes

Swiftheart -Gray tom with green eyes
Apprentice, Minnowpaw

Tallsong - Dark gray she-cat with blue eyes

Apprentice, Ripplepaw

Mosswind-Tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes

Ebonywing- Black she-cat with white paws and yellow eyes

Brokenclaw - Dark gray tabby tom with amber eyes
Apprentice, Shellpaw

Icepool-White she-cat with dark blue eyes
Apprentice, Meadowpaw

Ashfeather- Black she-cat with blue eyes

Daisyheart- Silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes
Apprentice, Ferretpaw

Breezetail- Black and white tom with blue eyes
Apprentice, Mothpaw

Rainpetal - Black she-cat with blue eyes eyes
Apprentice, Swanpaw

Berryheart - Ginger and cream she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Leopardpaw

Peachblossom - Cream she-cat with darker markings and green eyes

Ferretpelt - Speckled brown and white tom with yellow eyes

Mothpool - White and gray she-cat with blue eyes

Swanfeather - Fluffy white she-cat with green eyes

APPRENTICES

Minnowpaw- Silver she-cat with blue eyes (Daughter of Mosswind and Swiftheart)

Shellpaw - Speckled gray tom with green eyes (Son of Mosswind and Swiftheart)

Meadowpaw - Tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes (Daughter of Mosswind and Swiftheart)

Leopardpaw - Cream and black she-cat with amber eyes (Daughter of Peachblossom and Breezetail)

Ripplepaw - Black tom with green eyes. (Son of Peachblossom and Breezetail)

ELDERS

Ravenwing- Pretty dark gray she-cat with dark blue eyes

Dovestorm- Light gray she-cat with pale blue eyes

Pigeonpelt- Light gray tom with pale yellow eyes

Feathercloud- Fluffy white she-cat with blue eyes

Frostfire- White she-cat with pale gray flecks and green eyes

LICHENCLAN

LEADER Timberstar- Brown tom with amber eyes

DEPUTY Larkclaw- Brown tabby she-cat with a white tipped tail.

MEDICINE CAT Roseheart- Pale ginger she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Emberpaw

WARRIORS

Heatherwind- White and black she- cat with blue eyes
Apprentice, Marshpaw

Leafsong-Light brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes
Apprentice, Shrewpaw

Brackenheart-Red-brown tabby with a light brown chest
Apprentice, Pinepaw

Rowanwhisker-Dark red-brown she-cat with dark green eyes

Foxtail- Ginger tom with a white tail

Flamewhisker- Ginger she-cat

Seedclaw-Black and white tom with green eyes
Apprentice, Fennelpaw

Flowerheart- Pale brown she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Dapplepaw

Stumptail- Small brown tom with amber eyes

Krestlewind- Brown she-cat with green eyes

Briarsong- Pale brown she-cat with green eyes

APPRENTICES

Emberpaw - Ginger she-cat with green eyes (Daughter of Leafsong and Foxtail)

Dapplepaw - Spotted brown tabby she-cat with green eyes (Daughter of Leafsong and Foxtail)

Marshpaw - Brown she-cat with green eyes (Daughter of Rowanwhisker and Stumptail)

Pinepaw - Red-brown tom with amber eyes (Son of Rowanwhisker and Stumptail)

Fennelpaw - Brown tabby tom with amber eyes (Son of Rowanwhisker and Stumptail)

Shrewpaw - Dark brown tom with amber eyes (Son of Rowanwhisker and Stumptail)

ELDERS

Mousethorn - Long haired brown tom with green eyes

CATS OUTSIDE THE CLANS

Sheer Mountain's Home

Sheer Mountain -Brown she-cat with green eyes

Tumbleweed - Elderly, pale brown tom with yellow eyes

Finch - Brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Wren- Red-brown she-cat with green eyes

Sparrow - Brown tabby tom with green eyes

Nettle- Golden-brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes

Loners

Trout - Brown tom with yellow eyes

Turnip - Ginger tom with green eyes

Briar - Golden-brown she-cat with amber eyes

Hazel - Golden brown she-cat with amber eyes

River - Dark gray she-cat with blue eyes

Dew - Gray tabby tom with amber eyes

Spider - Black tom with yellow eyes

Rick - Black tom with amber eyes

Rouges

Ant - Small black tom with green eyes

Yew - Pale brown tom with green eyes

Ginger - Ginger she-cat with green eyes

Flick - Skinny gray tom with yellow eyes

Poppy - Black she-cat with yellow eyes

Kittypets

Jake - Fluffy, black and white tom with yellow eyes

Elwood - Black and white tom with yellow eyes

Lucky - Black tom with yellow eyes

Kip - Ginger tabby tom with yellow eyes

Polly - Tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes

Penny - Plump tortoiseshell she-cat with hazel eyes

Melon - Ginger and white she-cat with green eyes

Mossie - Tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes

Cocoa - Mottled brown she-cat with green eyes

Prologue

Thunder roared overhead, the black sky turned white with lightning. Torrential rain crashed into the cavern roof. Inside, three cats took shelter from the violent storm. A pale brown tom covered his loved ones, his mate and only daughter. His daughter trembled, terrified from the storm that raged. He hadn't seen a storm like this in years, he was suddenly grateful for his mate's choice of home. They were sheltered safely in the mountains, guarded by walls of stone.

"Tumbleweed." The she-cat muttered, her golden eyes were wide. "I hear them."

Not this again. Tumbleweed, resting his tail on his mate's shoulders. "Star, you can't go out there. Stay inside, wait it out."

"I can't." She whispered, Star's entire body trembled. "They're so loud, Tumbleweed. The stars are calling me."

"Star, *do not* leave this den." He said sternly. He looked at his daughter Sheer Mountain, she was huddling close to him. "She needs us right now."

"Stay with her." Star leapt to her paws and sprinted out into the storm.

"Star!" Tumbleweed shouted after his mate. He looked at Sheer Mountain she lifted her head, eyes filled with fear. "Star, come back!"

"Wh-where did she go?" Sheer Mountain squeaked from beside him. *I have to go get her.*

"Your mother is hearing her voices again." Tumbleweed sighed, he stood up. "Sheer Mountain, I'm going to bring her back inside. You stay here, don't leave you understand?"

Sheer Mountain nodded shakily. Tumbleweed picked up a bundle of

moss and covered Sheer Mountain with it. "You'll be safe in here, I promise." He touched his muzzle to her forehead and braced himself, running out into the storm. It was like running into a solid wall of water. It crashed into his pelt, soaking him instantly. The water ran down the mountainside, akin to a river.

Tumbleweed knew exactly where Star went, an empty area above their camp that overlooked the world below. Tumbleweed sprinted across the cavern, veering to the side when he reached the path up to the overlook. Sure enough, Star was standing at the edge, her head tilted towards the sky.

"Star!" He cried out. "Come inside!"

"I can't." She said, her voice barely audible through the crashing rain. Tumbleweed flinched as another bolt of lightning lit up the sky. "I wish you could hear them, Tumbleweed. They're so beautiful. They're calling me, louder than ever." Tumbleweed's claws scraped the stone. He was usually able to handle Star's madness, but she was going to get herself hurt or worse.

His mate believed that there were cats in the stars who tried speaking with her. She talking about the stars as if they were living, breathing, cats she had in the entire time that Tumbleweed knew her. Tumbleweed had fell in love with her curiosity and full heart, even her love for the stars but deep down, Tumbleweed knew that she was mad.

"Star, I'm begging you." He moved closer to her. "Come back inside. The stars can wait. Sheer Mountain needs her mother right now."

"Sheer Mountain." Star breathed out their daughter's name. "The stars told me about her, she has such an amazing destiny ahead of her. I wish I could see it. She'll do great things, you know."

"Star." Tumbleweed's voice trembled. "Tell her about it, come inside."

"I can't." She sat down. "Not yet."

"You're going to get sick." Tumbleweed was trying his best to reason

with her, but that was near impossible when she was like this. "Then you'll get Sheer Mountain sick. *Please*, listen to me."

"You go to her." Star said, still not pulling her attention from the stars. "I will join you again when I am ready. When she's ready."

"What does that mean?" Unease pricked up Tumbleweed's spine.

Star moved, she rose to her paws.. "They're telling me I have a place in the stars. They're waiting for me."

Tumbleweed hated the way she was speaking. *I have to put a stop to this.* "Star you're talking nonsense. Come in, now."

Star looked over her shoulder, golden eyes glowing as more lightning struck. "Tell Sheer Mountain I will be waiting for her. She'll do amazing things." Tumbleweed heard a crack, his eyes darted down to Star's paws where the stone was starting to crack.

"Star! Get back! The cliff!"

It was too late, the stone splintered and broke off. In an instant, Star was no longer there. She didn't cry out, she didn't make a single noise. Tumbleweed raced to the cliff edge, skidding to a stop. He locked eyes with Star as she fell. Her body hit the harsh, unforgiving stone below, and she didn't get up.

Tumbleweed was frozen solid, unable to take his eyes off Star's body. He could feel his heart shattering inside his chest. *No.* His mouth was agape and his body shook. *This isn't happening.*

Another crack of thunder broke Tumbleweed out of his trance. He jumped back and stumbled backwards. *No. No.* He suddenly remembred Sheer Mountain, cowering from the storm. *What am I going to tell her?* Tumbleweed slowly rose to his paws. He couldn't stay out here, Sheer Mountain needed him.

Feeling as if his paws were made of stone, Tumbleweed turned around and slowly walked back to their cavern. He approached the den and saw Sheer Mountain still hiding. Her eyes opened when Tumbleweed approached, his shattered heart fell apart even more. *She has her mother's eyes.*

Tumbleweed quickly realized that he would never see Star again, he would never hear her voice, smell her scent or sleep beside her. She would never get to see Sheer Mountain grow up. *Tell Sheer Mountain I will be waiting for her. She'll do amazing things.* Tumbleweed shook his pelt and stepped inside.

"Where's my mother?" Sheer Mountain questioned, her voice trembling.

Tumbleweed walked in, curling up next to her. "Your mother--" His voice cracked. "She won't be coming back, Sheer Mountain. I'm so sorry."

"What do you mean?" She whimpered. "Where did she go."

"The stars." Tumbleweed rested his muzzle on her forehead. "She went to the stars. Like she always dreamed of."

Chapter 1

Clouds drifted slowly overhead, the early morning air was chilly, biting at the ear-tips of the cats who lived in the mountains. Owlpaw breathed in the brisk air, her body shivering slightly. *Leaf-fall is here.* She thought fearfully. *We only have so much time before leaf-bare, we shouldn't be travelling in the snow.* Owlpaw looked down at her paws. *I don't know if I can. This will be my first leaf-bare. What happens if I get greencough?* She cleared her throat, it didn't feel any more scratchy than usual.

I just have to keep as healthy as can be. Owlpaw shook the thought of sickness away and padded back into the den that the Clan cats had been sleeping in. The rouge, Nettle, who had been injured by another rouge by the name of Raptor, was still sleeping.

Owlpaw padded to the rouge's side and gave her wound a gentle sniff. The only scent was of herbs, no infection. Owlpaw breathed a sigh of relief. *That's good at least.* She looked over Nettle's golden brown pelt, she would have a rather nasty scar, but she would live.

Owlpaw stepped back out into the mountain that she had called her home for almost two moons now. Her and seven other Clan cats had been sent by their leaders on a mission from StarClan. They originally had no idea what their mission was, until they met a loner named Sheer Mountain and her family who lived in the mountains. There was Sheer Mountain's father, Tumbleweed and her three adoptive kits, Finch, Wren and Sparrow. When they arrived in the mountains, the Clan cats had been visited by a former MoonClan medicine cat by the name of Mosscloud who told them their mission was to build a fifth Clan and return them to the mountains, and the leader of this new Clan was supposed to be Sheer Mountain.

Sheer Mountain didn't believe in StarClan, but her mother had. Her mother, a loner by the name of Star believed in cats that lived in the stars. This believe had gotten her killed during a thunderstorm. Sheer Mountain believed her mother was insane, and had gotten

rather upset with Owlpaw when she brought it up.

However, Owlpaw had told Sheer Mountain the truth, that it was her destiny to lead a new Clan and that she would give Sheer Mountain time to think about it. In the short time that had passed, she and Sheer Mountain hadn't spoken about it since then. Owlpaw had been focused on healing Nettle instead.

Owlpaw knew her travel mates were getting impatient, she had to find a way to move Sheer Mountain along without pushing her too much. *We can't wait forever, we have to go home eventually.* Owlpaw looked at the pale blue sky. *And if we take too long, we may get trapped here during leaf-bare.*

"Hey, Owlpaw!" Owlpaw heard the eager call of Wren. She and her two brothers were sitting on the other side of the cavern, with a ball of moss between them. "Can you come over here?"

"Sure." Owlpaw trotted over to the kits. "What do you need?" She looked at the three of them. Wren had a very faint scar on her leg, an injury from when Raptor and his rogue's tried driving the Clan cats out.

"We want you to play with us!" Finch declared, his eyes sparkling.

Owlpaw blinked in surprise. "You want me to play with you? Why?"

"We want to play a game but we an uneven number." Sparrow explained. "You're small enough to play with us, and you can be on a team with Wren!"

Owlpaw looked at the three kits in curiosity. "Are you sure?" She was small, but she wasn't as small as the kits.

"Yeah!" Wren jumped. "It will be fun!"

"Oh-okay." Owlpaw wasn't quite sure how to feel about playing with the kits, she had never done much playing, she had been too sick as a kit to really play with her siblings, Briarrose didn't let her. "What do I do?"

"See the two piles of moss?" Wren pointed to two different small

little nests of moss on either side of them. "Get the ball to the other side and we win!" Wren backed up, putting her back to one of the moss piles. "It's our job to protect this one."

"Okay." Owlpaw nodded slowly and crouched down, matching what Sparrow and Finch were doing as well. Wren set the moss ball in the center between them and backed up to stand besides Owlpaw.

"Get ready." Wren began. "Set." Owlpaw prepared herself for this game. "Go!" In an instant, Wren, Finch and Sparrow dived forwards towards the moss ball. *Wow they're quick!* Owlpaw thought in amazement and dived after them.

Finch caught the moss ball first, hooking it in his claw and tossing it to Sparrow who caught it in his teeth. He dived forward, but Wren jumped in front of him. She swiped forward, knocking it out of his teeth. It landed on the stone floor. Owlpaw took her chance and ran forward, picking the moss ball up in her teeth.

She started running for the goal, but instantly felt tiny claws in her pelt. She looked over her shoulder and saw Finch and Sparrow had jumped on her. They weren't that much smaller than her and the combined weight of the two toms dragged her down. She landed on her stomach, the ball of moss flying out of her teeth.

"Hey that's not fair!" Wren argued as Finch jumped off Owlpaw's back to run for the moss ball.

"She's bigger than us!" Sparrow argued with a sneer. "Of course it's fair!" Owlpaw got back to her paws and made a run for Finch and Sparrow. The two toms reached the moss ball and Finch hooked it with his claw again and threw it over Owlpaw and Wren's heads. Sparrow ran after it and picked up with when it hit the ground.

Wren ran around and jumped on her brother's back, causing him to flatten against the ground and drop the ball. Wren picked it up and started charging towards the other side. Owlpaw saw Finch running in to stop her. Owlpaw jumped in front of Finch and stopped him as Wren raced by.

Sparrow ducked around Owlpaw's side and met up with Finch.

Owlpaw ran along side them as Wren made a break for the nest. "Not so fast, Wren!" Finch declared and ran faster, his little paw thrumming against the stone. *He's so fast.* Owlpaw was older than him and she struggled to keep up with him.

Finch reached Wren and extended his paws, tripping Wren. She stumbled forward and dropped the moss ball. Owlpaw saw Sparrow running for the ball while Finch and Wren wrestled for a moment. Owlpaw sprang forward, catching the moss ball before Sparrow.

She swatted the ball forward, it soared through the air and landed in the pile of moss. "We won!" Wren declared and jumped up in delight. "Good job, Owlpaw!"

"That was actually a lot of fun." Owlpaw laughed. Her heart was racing and she felt energy buzzing in her paws. *I can't remember the last time I had this much fun.* Owlpaw purred happily.

"That was a good toss." Sparrow praised. "Is that what warriors learn?"

Owlpaw chuckled. "Not usually, but those skills do help when it comes to games like this."

"I'd love to learn skills like that." Finch spoke, his ears twitching happily.

"You could probably ask some of my travel mates if they could teach you something, if Sheer Mountain's okay with it of course."

"Really?" All three kits beamed. "That would be so cool!"

"Is that what you're doing with your time?" Owlpaw heard a sharp voice behind her. She looked behind her and saw Slatepaw glaring at her. Behind him the hunting patrol consisting of Earthpelt, Leafdawn, Berryheart and Sheer Mountain had returned. "Playing with kits?"

Owlpaw narrowed her eyes. "What else should I be doing? Nettle's resting."

"I don't know, maybe our mission?"

"What mission?" Wren tilted her head.

"Nothing, Wren." Owlpaw told her. "Thank you for inviting me to play, I should go talk to my Clanmates." She started walking past Slatepaw. "You know, I think you're running out of ways to insult me."

Slatepaw growled. "It's *your* job to convince Sheer Mountain to become this new leader. Shouldn't you be doing that?"

"I'm giving Sheer Mountain time to decide. It's not an easy decision to give up your entire life for something you don't understand." Owlpaw countered. "This isn't like deciding to have squirrel for breakfast instead of mouse."

"We're wasting time out here." Slatepaw growled. "If she's not going to become leader then we need to figure out a cat who will."

"She will, Slatepaw." Owlpaw stopped walking to assure him. "I know she will, she just needs time."

Slatepaw narrowed his amber eyes. "I sure hope you know what you're doing, Owlpaw." With a scoff he pushed past Owlpaw, flicking his tail in annoyance. Owlpaw let out a low sigh and looked at Sheer Mountain who was talking with her kits. *I hope I know what I'm doing too.*

Chapter 2

"*Sheer Mountain! Sheer Mountain, my precious* daughter. Open your eyes!" Sheer Mountain's eyes slowly opened. She lifted her heavy head, letting out a large yawn. Cuddled up next to her was Wren, Finch and Sparrow. Her heart filled with the love at the sight of them. *They're so sweet.* She nuzzled her kits gently. Sheer Mountain didn't give birth to the three kits, but she loved just as much as if she had.

Sheer Mountain looked towards the entrance of the cave. She saw the light of dawn just barely peeking through the entrance. She slowly stood up, careful not to wake the kits and stepped over them, out into the cavern entrance. The early air was brisk, she suppressed a shiver and glance up at the sky, she could still see the stars.

She had heard her mother's voice in her dreams. Sheer Mountain hadn't dreamed of her mother in moons, not until Owlpaw and the others showed up. Sheer Mountain sighed and started walking towards the cliff. She sat down on the edge, looking at where the rock had broken, causing her mother to fall to her death.

Sheer Mountain sat down on the edge of the cliff. The Clan cats coming into her life had changed everything she ever though she knew. Sheer Mountain had always considered her mother insane, her insanity is what caused her to die. Always talking about cats in the stars, which Sheer Mountain had written off as part of her madness until the Clan cats showed up.

Owlpaw had told her of something called StarClan and that when Clan cats die, they believe they live in the stars. Sheer Mountain had been so infuriated with this information, and she didn't know why. She had eventually calmed down and made up with Owlpaw, but then Owlpaw had changed her world once again, telling her that the reason the Clan cats had come to her was because Sheer Mountain was supposed to lead an entirely new Clan.

For days after Sheer Mountain had been told this, she would toss and turn as her mother's voice rang in her ears. She figured that the whole situation was driving her mad. She had really enjoyed making friends with Owlpaw, but starting a completely new life? With a new name and a new home? Sheer Mountain couldn't even imagine it.

Owlpaw was an incredibly interesting cat. She was young but had an interesting life and views. The other Clan cats were similar to what she knew. They hunted and fought like most loners, but they had very interesting skills. Other than that, they weren't that different from other rogues and loners Sheer Mountain had met in her life.

Owlpaw, however, had eyes full of curiosity. She was smaller than normal and had a knowledge of herbs and seemed to be particularly driven by their mission. The others seemed to view it as a simple task, while Owlpaw seemed dedicated to it, like she had been *born* to do it. *I've never really believed in destiny, but Owlpaw is doing what she was meant to.*

"I was wondering what was up here?" Sheer Mountain heard a voice that made her jump slightly. She looked over her shoulder, not expecting someone else to join her. She saw the rouge Nettle standing at the entrance. "What are you doing up here?"

"I woke up early." Sheer Mountain explained. "This is where I come to think." Nettle was the newest member of her home, and at first Sheer Mountain had felt incredibly hostile towards the rogue when Owlpaw discovered her, but after Nettle saved Owlpaw's life from Raptor. Sheer Mountain had welcomed Nettle into her home and had warmed up to the rouge. She had good stories that she would tell Finch, Wren and Sparrow.

"It's pretty up here." Nettle approached Sheer Mountain, limping as she walked.

"Are you okay to be walking around?" Sheer Mountain checked, looking at her scarred leg.

"Yeah," Nettle nodded, sitting down a little ways away from Sheer

Mountain. "Owlpaw actually recommended I start getting out and stretching my legs. I've been lying down too long."

"I'm glad you're feeling better." Sheer Mountain looked out over the cliff again, the river below flowing slowly. She remembered she had been sitting up here when she saw a strange group of cats show up the by the river and one of them fell into the raging waters beneath.

Sheer Mountain had raced down the mountain to save Owlpaw, not knowing it would change her life forever.

"You alright?" Nettle questioned, her voice timid.

"Yeah." Sheer Mountain sighed. "Just have a lot of thoughts on my mind lately."

"I know we don't really know each other." Nettle stood up, favoring her leg. "But, you can probably relate to me more than the Clan cats, so if you ever want to talk. Just ask, okay?"

"Thank you, Nettle." Sheer Mountain gave the she-cat a gentle purr. "I'll keep that in mind."

Nettle dipped her head and limped away from the cliff, leaving Sheer Mountain alone again. *I don't think Nettle would quite understand what I'm dealing with, but I do appreciate her kindness.* Sheer Mountain silently watched the sun rise, trying to keep her thoughts clear and just enjoy the daybreak.

When the sun was high enough, Sheer Mountain figured she should get her day started. She returned to the cavern where the Clan cats were starting the stir. The first cat she saw was Earthpelt, Owlpaw's mentor. "Good morning." Sheer Mountain greeted.

"Good morning." Earthpelt dipped her head. "You're out quite early."

"I woke up early." Sheer Mountain explained. "Figured I would watch the sunrise."

"The SunClan leader, Dawnstar, is also my aunt. My father told me that she would always get up before the sunrise and watch it. She still does it most days." Sheer Mountain wasn't sure how she felt

getting compared to a Clan leader. She had heard a lot of stories about Dawnstar, and she sounded like an incredible cat but Sheer Mountain wasn't that kind of a cat.

"She seems like an interesting cat." Sheer Mountain commented, but quickly changed the subject. "So, what are our plans for hunting today?"

"I know that Berryheart wants to do some training for Leopardpaw today. You could join us for that. You could see what it looks like training an apprentice." Sheer Mountain felt slightly uncomfortable at the comment. *Are they all trying to sway me?*

"Sure." Sheer Mountain agreed and the two of them met up with Leopardpaw and Berryheart. The four she-cats ventured out of the cavern and towards the open field.

"MoonClan cats hunt best in the open." Berryheart explained. "Our territory is a wide open moor. We love hunting rabbits, we're able to run quickly to catch rabbits. This field isn't quite like home, but it's better than the forest."

"There's no trees in your territory?"

Berryheart shook her head. "There's some, but we prefer the open air. Most of us even sleep in the open during the warmer seasons. We have dens for when it gets colder, but we prefer to sleep under the moonlight."

"I can't imagine not sleeping in a den." Sheer Mountain shivered. "I would feel so exposed."

"I didn't think I would enjoy it either." Berryheart replied. "And my sister, Peachblossom, struggles more with than I do but I feel like I was destined to be a MoonClan cat. It's where my heart truly belongs. *I know Berryheart started out as a rouge, how did she adjust so well?*

"What do you want me to do today, Berryheart?" Leopardpaw questioned, facing her mentor.

"We're going to practice your tracking, actually." Berryheart

explained. "And we'll use Sheer Mountain as practice."

"What?" Sheer Mountain flattened her ears slightly.

Berryheart turned to her. "I want you to go and hide, do everything you can to hide your trail and Leopardpaw is going to track you. Go as far as you want."

"Okay." Sheer Mountain wasn't entirely sure about what she was doing, but figured it would be fun.

"Close your eyes, Leopardpaw." The MoonClan apprentice closed her eyes. "Go ahead, Sheer Mountain." Sheer Mountain nodded and turned away, she walked away swiftly but silently so that Leopardpaw wouldn't know. She went behind Leopardpaw, she had the perfect hiding spot in mind.

Sheer Mountain picked up the pace once she was far enough away to not notify Leopardpaw of her location. She veered into the nearby forest where there was a hollowed out log leaned up against a large set of boulders.

Sheer Mountain rolled in a nearby pile of herbs to mask her scent and climbed inside the log, using her claws to secure her into place. It was a tight fit, but Leopardpaw would certainly have a hard time finding her.

There was a crack in the side of the wood, large enough for Sheer Mountain to look through. In the distance she saw Leopardpaw, Berryheart and Earthpelt in the distance. After a few moments, Leopardpaw rose to her paws and began sniffing the air. She quickly caught Sheer Mountain's original trail and started tracking.

She seemed confident until she neared the forest where Sheer Mountain had intentionally made it more difficult to track her. She dropped her head so that Leopardpaw wouldn't be able to see her. She could hear Leopardpaw's movements around the log. She heard the sound of her sniffing the air as she approached the herb pile that Sheer Mountain had rolled in.

"Very clever, Sheer Mountain." Leopardpaw purred to herself and

continued sniffing around. She climbed the small rockpile and sniffed around some more. "Found you!" Sheer Mountain heard an eager declare from Leopardpaw and Sheer Mountain saw her excited amber eyes peering into the log.

"Good job." Sheer Mountain laughed and carefully crawled out of the log. "I thought I had you tricked there."

"You did for a while, but I figured it out." Leopardpaw boasted, holding her head high. Together, Sheer Mountain and Leopardpaw walked back to Earthpelt and Berryheart.

"Good job, Leopardpaw." Berryheart purred. "You're becoming quite the tracker at such a young age."

Sheer Mountain watched the two interact, she semed to notice a special bond between mentors and apprentice, even between Leafdawn and Slatepaw. The arrogant AshClan apprentice seemed to at least respect his mentor. *Mentors and apprentices must be pretty important.* Sheer Mountain noted. She had seen how the others talked about their Clanmates. *They all seem very connected.* Sheer Mountain thought. She couldn't help but wonder what living in such a close community would be like. *It actually seems...really nice.*

Chapter 3

The gentle sound of wind rustled the leaves of the forest. The breeze carried the scent of prey through the large oak trees of SunClan territory. Hiding in the trees, tracking down prey was the dappled black, brown, cream and ginger pelt of SunClan apprentice Blossompaw. She kept her body low to the ground but her muzzle high, sniffing the chilly breeze for any signs of prey.

She caught the scent of squirrel on the air and breathed it in. *Found some.* Blossompaw dropped into a crouch, creeping through the SunClan forest and tracking her prey. She padded along the forest floor, making sure to keep her tail low. Her ears twitched at every little sound, keeping her eyes peeled for her prey.

At long last, Blossompaw spotted her prey. A plump red squirrel, creating a small pile of seeds, getting ready for the cold season to arrive. *Leaf-bare won't arrive for you little friend.* Blossompaw thought, breathing in the squirrel's scent once more. Her tail tip twitched and she readied herself to pounce.

She flattened her ears and wiggled her haunches before giving a strong leap. Her paws fell just short of the squirrel and she kicked up a flurry of grass and leaves, the squirrel turned tail and quick as lightning, darted up into the closest oak tree and out of view. "Fox dung!" Blossompaw swore, lashing her tail. *Such a rookie mistake!* She scolded herself. *I should've gotten closer.*

"That's unfortunate." Blossompaw heard the voice of her mentor, Mudfall, and watched the dark brown tom step out of the trees and into view. "Don't beat yourself up too hard, Blossompaw."

"I should've caught that." Blossompaw shook her head. "I'm better than this."

"You've only been an apprentice for two moons, Blossompaw." Mudfall replied. "You still have much to learn, there will still be many mistakes for you to make and for you to learn from."

Blossompaw just flattened her ears and sighed. "Come on," Mudfall touched his tail to her pelt. "Let's gather the rest of your catch and head back to camp."

"Okay." Blossompaw wanted to make up for her failure, not return to camp, but she listened to her mentor. They gathered up her other three pieces of prey and reached the SunClan camp.

It was just past sunhigh so the cats of SunClan were busy. Blossompaw spotted Cinderflame surrounded by several SunClan cats as she gave patrol and hunting orders. Dawnstar stood close by, it looked like she was preparing to leave for patrol with Adderstrike, Flashtail, Petalbreeze, Brackenpelt and Yarrowtail. All four elders were out enjoying the cool air and chatting over some prey.

Blossompaw dropped her prey on the fresh-kill pile and turned to her mentor, waiting for her next task. "Why don't you take some prey to the queens."

Blossompaw narrowed her eyes. "Isn't Dovepool your mate? Shouldn't *you* be taking her fresh-kill?"

"I'm not an apprentice and I have a hunting patrol to go on." Mudfall scolded. "Do what I tell you." He walked away, twitching his tail sharply. *Wow.* Blossompaw thought. *What's his problem?* Mudfall was a fairly level headed cat but he seemed genuinely upset that she told him to take his mate fresh-kill.

I wonder what's going on with him. Blossompaw didn't think it was her place to say anything, she just grabbed four pieces of prey and headed to the nursery where the queens were. She was a little surprised to not see Heatherflight in the nursery. Though she wasn't nursing any kits, the mental trauma of giving birth to two dead kits had kept Heatherflight in the nursery ever since.

Maybe she's finally recovering. Blossompaw thought hopefully as she stepped inside the nursery. "Hello, Blossompaw." Dovepool greeted with a purr as Blossompaw set the prey down. "Bringing us some prey?"

"Yep." Blossompaw nodded. "Mudfall asked me to."

"You'd think he could do it himself." Sedgefern replied with a snort. "You are his mate after all."

"Oh hush, Sedgefern." Dovepool flicked her tail, silencing her sister. "Mudfall has never been to great at expressing his emotions. I think he's terrified of becoming a father, and he doesn't want to show that in front of anyone else in here. Once my kits are born he'll be a wonderful father, I just know it."

"Falconheart is pretty scared too." Sedgefern chuckled. "But I'm not worried, I know he'll be a great father."

Sedgefern had moved into the nursery just a few short days after Owlpaw and Earthpelt left the mountains and Dovepool had joined her sister a few days later. They were due to have kits any day now, their bellies round with their unborn kits.

The thought of Owlpaw made Blossompaw's heart hurt. She missed her sister with each passing day, and she was terrified that she would never see Owlpaw again. She trusted her sister, she knew that deep down, aside from her small size and sickness, Owlpaw was strong.

"Are you alright, Blossompaw?" She heard the voice of Dovepool and she shook away her fears about Owlpaw. "You look sad."

"Sorry," Blossompaw shook her head. "Just thinking about, Owlpaw, is all. I miss her."

"I'm sure she's fine." Sedgefern purred. "Owlpaw is so much stronger than she looks, plus she's not alone."

"I'm just wondering what their mission actually is." Dovepool added. "I hope they come home soon, I want Earthpelt to meet her new kin." She gazed lovingly at her round belly.

"Well," Blossompaw mew, rising to her paws. "I should see if Mudfall wants me to do any thing else.

Blossompaw turned to leave the nursery, but a sudden cry of pain

stopped her in her tracks. Blossompaw looked over her shoulder to see Sedgefern suddenly on her paws, eyes wide and her face twisted in pain.

"What's wrong, Sedgefern?" Dovepool questioned, her voice sounding panicked.

"I-I don't know." Sedgefern breathed out. "I just got this sudden jolt of pain." She looked at her belly, her breathing became heavy.

Squirreltail rose to her paws and quickly crossed the nursery to Sedgefern's side, giving her a sniff. "You're giving birth, Sedgefern." She explained.

"What?" Sedgefern's voice was shrill, Blossompaw could tell how panicked she was.

"Calm down." Squirreltail's voice was soothing. *Squirreltail has given birth to two litters of kits and seen many of SunClan's births. She knows what she's doing.* "Lay down on your side and just breathe. Your kits need you to be calm." Without turning away from Sedgefern, Squirreltail continued speaking. "Blossompaw, go get the medicine cats please."

Blossompaw, feeling sightly panicked, turned and quickly ran across the camp towards the medicine cat den. She skidded to a stop in front of it and poked her head inside. It was just Honeyfrost inside, setting herbs out to dry. Honeyfrost quickly sense Blossompaw's urgency and was on high alert.

"What's wrong, Blossompaw?" She questioned.

"Sedgefern is giving birth." Blossompaw explained hurriedly. "Squirreltail told me to come and get you and Pebblestep."

"Pebblestep is out gathering herbs, but we'll be fine. Help me get some herbs real quick."

Honeyfrost turned around and began digging through her herb store. She set aside several herbs. There was several soft looking leaves with jagged edges as well as some thin, spiky leaves, moss and a stick. "Can you grab the moss and the stick? I'll get the

raspberry leaves and the fennel."

Blossompaw agreed and managed to get both the moss and stick into her jaws, following the medicine cat back to the nursery. Inside Sedgefern was panting heavily with Dovepool and Squirreltail attempting to calm her down.

"It's okay, Sedgefern." Honeyfrost mewed gently and set the raspberry leaves and fennel down, situation herself at Sedgefern's rear. "Give her the stick, Blossompaw." Blossompaw set the stick down in front of Sedgefern's muzzle and gave the moss to Honeyfrost.

"Where's Falconheart?" Sedgefern questioned, her voice revealing how much pain she was in.

"He's on patrol." Honeyfrost replied. "He'll be back in time to see your kits."

Blossompaw could tell that she wanted Falconheart to be here, but it would take too long for someone to go out and find him. "Alright, Sedgefern." Honeyfrost took a deep breath. "I need you to take that stick in your teeth and bite down when you feel pain. It's almost time to start delivering. I'll need you three she-cats on stand by for help, okay?"

It took Blossompaw a moment to realize that Honeyfrost was talking to her. *I'm not a medicine cat! Can I really help deliver some kits?* Blossompaw just gave a nod and sat next to Squirreltail while Dovepool helped keep her sister calm.

Sedgefern let out a hiss of pain and bit down on the stick, Blossompaw couldn't help but be nervous. She remembered hearing horror stories about Heatherflight's birth, as well as her own. *Me and my siblings were born a whole moon early.* Blossompaw thought. *Sedgefern's kits are pretty much on time and she's healthy. It should be okay, right?* Blossompaw fidgeted with her paws nervously.

"Don't be afraid, Blossompaw." Squirreltail mewed quietly. *How did she know?* "Sedgefern is a perfectly healthy young cat, all of this is normal." Blossompaw lowered her ears slightly and focused on

Sedgefern.

A few more moments passed and Honeyfrost raised her voice. "The first kit is coming, Sedgefern. Keep breathing, you're doing great."

Sedgefern howled in pain, biting down on the stick harder in an instant, a little kit tumbled into the nest. "Dovepool, take this kit please." Honeyfrost instructed and Dovepool swooped in, taking in a tiny, gray kit. She began rapidly licking up the kits spine, within a few short moments, the kit let out a mighty mew and began squirming underneath Dovepool's tongue. Blossompaw felt a rush of excitement in her body. *Such a tiny little kit!* She eagerly waited for more kits to come.

After more cries of pain from Sedgefern, another kit entered the world. "Blossompaw, its your turn." Blossompaw jumped to her paws.

"What do I do?"

"Lick the fur up its spine, it will get its blood flowing." Blossompaw padded over to Honeyfrost and carefully took the kit in her jaws. She sat down and began rasping her tongue over the kits's spin, fluffing up its already spiky fur. After just a few licks, the kit began mewling and wriggling.

"It's meowing!" Blossompaw announced eagerly.

"Good." Honeyfrost purred. "Keep licking it." Honeyfrost placed her paw on Sedgefern's belly. "I think we've got one more on the way. You're almost done, Sedgefern."

A few more cries later, and the third kit was born. This one was giving to Squirreltail who easily got the kit's blood flowing and was met with cries. Blossompaw watched as Honeyfrost worked to stop the bleeding, she had blood on her paws but there wasn't a lot.

"Great job, Sedgefern." Honeyfrost purred. "You have three beautiful kits."

"I want to see them." Sedgefern raised her head weakly. Blossompaw and the others placed all three kits at Sedgefern's belly

and they eagerly began nursing.

"Two toms and she-cat." Honeyfrost purred. "They're so beautiful, I can't wait for my brother to see them."

"Me too." Blossompaw saw nothing but pure love in Sedgefern's eyes as she looked at her newborn kits.

"They're so cute." Blossompaw purred.

"Thank you for your help, Blossompaw." Sedgefern replied softly.

A few moments later, Blossompaw heard the voice of Falconheart and the tom exploded into the nursery. "Sedgefern!" He cried out. "Heatherflight told me you were having kits are you--" His voice broke off as he looked at the small bundle of three kits.

His amber eyes went wide and flooded with the same love that Blossompaw saw in Sedgefern's eyes. "Oh my goodness." He walked slowly up to the kits. "They're...they're incredible." It was as if Falconheart's entire world had changed before him.

"Aren't they?" Sedgefern purred. "This one looks just like you." She rested her tail on the tom that Blossompaw had cared for. "His fur is really spiky though." She giggled.

"They're so incredible." Falconheart touched his muzzle to Sedgefern's forehead. "I'm so proud of you."

Blossompaw felt love fill the air as the two of them bonded over their two kits, growing even closer. She looked at the kits as they eagerly nursed from their mother. *Welcome to SunClan, little kits.*

Chapter 4

Rain felt lazily from the sky, tiny drops of water splashing against the stone. Sheer Mountain looked out into the cavern while Wren, Finch and Sparrow happily behind her. The clouds overhead were gray, but they weren't bunched together. *Hopefully it doesn't storm.* Sheer Mountain watched the rain fall slowly. Finch, Wren and Sparrow hated storms, she didn't want them to have to suffer through that.

Sheer Mountain looked towards the fresh-kill pile, it was getting low. *We need to hunt.* She thought with a twitch of her tail. She knew that some of the Clan cats were out hunting, but Sheer Mountain wanted to get out and do some hunting herself. She stepped out into the slow rainfall and noticed Owlpaw talking with Nettle. It appeared that Nettle was testing her leg by putting pressure on it.

She walked around, her limp hardly noticeable as she moved. Feeling curious, Sheer Mountain approached the two cats. "How's it going?" Sheer Mountain questioned.

"Good." Owlpaw replied, watching Nettle. "Her leg is starting to return to normal."

"I want to put it to the test." Nettle mewed urgently. "I want to get out of the cave, I feel like I'm going crazy."

"You could come hunting with me." Sheer Mountain offered. Her relationship was Nettle wasn't the best, her animosity towards the rouge upon first meeting her hadn't quite died off yet. *I want to show her that I don't hold anything against her.*

"I'm not sure." Owlpaw shuffled her paws. "Your wound is still healing."

"We'll take it slow." Sheer Mountain promised. "She needs to get out and stretch her leg, right?"

"I suppose." Owlpaw dropped her head. "Just, be careful okay?"

"We will be, Owlpaw." Sheer Mountain assured the young cat, then turned to Nettle. "You ready?"

"Absolutely!" Nettle beamed, her eyes shimmering with excitement. "Feels like forever since I've been hunting."

"Then let's head out." Sheer Mountain turned towards the cavern entrance and Nettle followed quickly behind, only with a small limp. "We don't want to get caught in a storm." She looked up at the sky. "Though it doesn't seem like it will."

"It could always change though." Nettle replied as they walked down the sloped stone path. "And Owlpaw probably won't want me out that long."

"Right." Sheer Mountain nodded and they stepped out into the open air. The rain continued to fall steadily as the two she-cats ventured out into the field. Sheer Mountain wasn't quite sure what kind of conversation to hold with Nettle. *I don't really know anything about her.* Sheer Mountain honestly felt a little awkward in this situation.

"So," Nettle mewed, she also seemed uncomfortable. "Where should we hunt? You live around here, where's the best place to hunt?"

"I like hunting in the forest." Sheer Mountain mewed. "It's always full of prey."

"Lead the way." Nettle gave her a small nod and Sheer Mountain began padding towards the forest, Nettle followed close behind.

"If your leg starts hurting, let me know." Sheer Mountain urged

"Will do."

The two she-cats reached the forest and Sheer Mountain was glad to have some shelter from the rain. She raised her muzzle and breathed in the forest air, catching the scent of squirrel on the air. "You smell that?" Sheer Mountain asked Nettle.

Nettle sniffed the air and nodded. "I do. It smells close."

Sheer Mountain lowered her body to the ground and began tracking the squirrel, she focused intently on tracking her prey, drowning out everything else. She kept a keen eye on everything in front of her. She carefully avoided a stray branch on the ground, and as she crept through the trees spotted the gray squirrel att he base of the tree.

Sheer Mountain honed in on her prey and flexed her claws, tightening her crouch and preparing to leap. She licked her lips and waggled her tail, using all of her strength to leap forward. She pinned the squirrel to the ground and killed it with a swift bite to the throat. It died with a small squeak.

"Nice catch!" Nettle called, running up to Sheer Mountain. "You're a great hunter."

Sheer Mountain's pelt burned slightly at her compliment. "Thank you. I'd like to see you hunt though."

Nettle's eyes sparkled and she began sniffing the air and began tracking down some prey. Sheer Mountain caught the scent of a starling. *Birds can be difficult to catch.* Sheer Mountain noted. *Will she be able to catch it with her bad leg?*

Sheer Mountain silently followed Nettle as she tracked down her prey. Nettle's pawsteps were silent, her eyes intent. She slowly twitched her tail and seemed very aware of her surroundings.

She's a keen hunter. Sheer Mountain noted and kept watching her. Sheer Mountain spotted the starling perched on the ground, pecking at the damp earth, searching for worms. Nettle dropped into a crouch that was almost identical to Sheer Mountain's.

The starling's dark feathers reflected a blue light, and it was completely unaware of Nettle' presence. *She has an injured leg, she hasn't hunted for nearly two moons and birds are incredibly difficult to catch. I wonder how she will do.*

Nettle waited patiently, Sheer Mountain watched with interest. Nettle's haunches wiggled and she gave a leap. Before the starling could even spread its wings to fly, Nettle killed it. *Impressive.*

"Very nice." Sheer Mountain praised.

"Thank you." Nettle purred loudly. "I was worried I wouldn't be able to catch it, my leg feels so stiff." She stretched out her injured leg tenderly.

"You did a great job." Sheer Mountain assured her. *She really did do a great job. Anyone else watching her wouldn't know if she was injured or out of practice.*

"Thanks." Nettle looked back at Sheer Mountain, her voice genuine. *She's an incredible fighter as well. I'll be happy to share a home with Nettle.*

Without realizing it, Sheer Mountain began to think of the Clans. *If I did join this Clan, would Nettle follow?* Fear crept into her heart as once again she thought about her so called destiny. *I wish I could just stop thinking about it.*

"Are you alright?" Nettle questioned, pulling Sheer Mountain out of her thoughts.

"Yeah," Sheer Mountain sighed. "Just have a lot on my mind."

"Want to talk about it?" Part of Sheer Mountain really wanted to talk with Nettle about what was plaguing her mind, but she would never understand. Sheer Mountain wasn't even sure *she* understood what was happening.

"It's hard to explain." Sheer Mountain replied, brushing Nettle off. "Maybe later, but it's not something I can just talk about."

"Alright." Nettle seemed rather concerned. "Well if you ever want to."

"Thanks, Nettle." Sheer Mountain bowed her head.

In the distance, Sheer Mountain heard the low rumbling of thunder, causing the fur on her spine to rise. "We need to get home."

"Are you sure?" Nettle lifted her muzzle and sniffed the air. "We just got started, it's just a little thunder."

"It could get worse very quickly." Sheer Mountain flicked her her tail. "Wren, Finch and Sparrow are scared of storms. I need to be there for them."

"Alright," Nettle seemed to understand which Sheer Mountain was grateful for. "Let's get going then." With their two pieces of prey, Sheer Mountain and Nettle started the journey home. She could see the dark storm clouds moving in quickly as well as more thunder. *I hope they're okay.* Sheer Mountain began to panic as she thought about her kits and the rain fall increased.

We need to hurry. Almost forgetting about Nettle, Sheer Mountain began walking even faster as her pelt became more and more soaked. They crossed the field and the rain was surging down, a loud crash of thunder sounded overhead after a bolt of lightning illuminated the sky.

After what seemed like forever, Sheer Mountain and Nettle finally reached the stone slope. Sheer Mountain raced up the slope, dropping her fresh-kill on the pile before running to her cavern. Inside, Tumbleweed was inside keeping the three kits close. "There you are." Tumbleweed lifted his head as she raced inside.

Sheer Mountain shook her pelt which had been thoroughly soaked by the rain. "Sorry." Sheer Mountain dipped her head and approached Finch, Wren and Sparrow. They quickly rushed to her side and nuzzled into her pelt, even though it was drenched.

"We were worried about you, Sheer Mountain." Finch whimpered.

Sheer Mountain rasped her tongue over Finch's head. "Don't worry," Sheer Mountain purred. "Nothing could ever keep me from the three of you."

"That storm came on very suddenly." Tumbleweed mewed, Sheer Mountain noticed that his voice was dry. "It reminds of the storm from the night your mother died."

Sheer Mountain dropped her ears. "Why are you brining that up?"

"I've been thinking about her a lot lately." Tumbleweed sighed. "And

I know you have to." Sheer Mountain looked at the floor. "She would be very interested to meet these Clan cats, I think. They seem very much like her."

"I suppose so." Sheer Mountain kept her voice low as the three kits drifted off to sleep.

"You know something I don't, Sheer Mountain." Sheer Mountain looked at her father in surprise. "Of course you don't have to tell me, but I know these cats want something from you." He let out a series of coughs, making Sheer Mountain feel nervous. "Whatever happens, Sheer Mountain," He cleared his throat. "I want you to make the choice *you* think is right, don't follow a path that you don't trust." Sheer Mountain stared at her father, she had never really heard him talk like this before.

"Where is all this coming from?" Sheer Mountain questioned.

"Call it an elder's intuition." Tumbleweed flicked his ears. "There's something more going on here, and I can tell that you're troubled. Don't worry about it too much, Sheer Mountain. You'll find the right path."

Even though Tumbleweed didn't know the exact situation, Sheer Mountain felt comforted by his words. With her kits at her side, Sheer Mountain rested her chin on her paws and closed her eyes. *No matter what happens, I'll get through it as long as I have my family.* She breathed out a comforted sigh as she drifted off into sleep.

Chapter 5

"I told you, I'm not hungry, Sheer Mountain." Tumbleweed grumbled.

"You keep saying that." Sheer Mountain lashed her tail. "When was the last time you ate?"

"Last night." Tumbleweed yawned.

"Half a mouse doesn't count." Sheer Mountain ducked her head. "I saw your scraps."

"What do you want me to say, Sheer Mountain?" Tumbleweed glared at his daughter. "I don't have much of an appetite lately."

Sheer Mountain sighed. "I'm worried about you, you've *always* had a big appetite." She looked over her father. His pelt wasn't as shiny as it usually was and he seemed to be losing weight. "You've also been coughing a lot lately."
"I've just got a small cold." Tumbleweed said with a cough. "I've fought off many illnesses in my days, Sheer Mountain."

Sheer Mountain's fears only grew. "Then get some rest and try and eat soon, please."

"Sure thing, Pebble."

Sheer Mountain flattened her ears. *He hasn't called me "Pebble" since I was kit. What's going on with him?* Tumbleweed turned away and walked slowly towards their cavern, coughing the whole way. It had been four days since the storm and their weird conversation which Sheer Mountain still didn't really understand. *I need another opinion.* Sheer Mountain padded swiftly towards the Clan cat's cavern where Owlpaw was resting.

"Hey, Owlpaw?" Sheer Mountain called to her. She lifted her head and rose to her paws, approaching Sheer Mountain curiously.

"What do you need?" Owlpaw questioned, Sheer Mountain tried to

guess if Owlpaw thought she was giving her an answer.

"I'm worried about my father." Sheer Mountain explained. "He's not eating, he's had a cough, he's losing weight and he's been acting weird. He's been talking about weird things and calling me old nicknames."

Owlpaw blinked and tilted her head. "Any other symptoms? Are his eyes and nose streaming?"

Sheer Mountain shook her head. "No, it may be nothing and I've seen him sick before but something just feels...wrong."

"It's worth checking out." Owlpaw mewed. "I'm gonna go ask him some questions," She replied. "He may be more willing to open up to me."

"I don't know." Sheer Mountain felt uneasy. "He's never been a really open cat. He tends to keep to himself. The only cat he would ever open up to was my mother."

"I'm not going to press him for questions, I just want to see if he'll tell me any more symptoms." Owlpaw padded out of the cave with Sheer Mountain following. She headed towards the cave where Tumbleweed was and Sheer Mountain sat down outside, waiting impatient for Owlpaw to come back out.

After a few long moments, Owlpaw stepped back out into the main cavern, Sheer Mountain rose to her paws and faced the Clan cat. "So?"

"He didn't want to tell me much, and he knew that you asked me to go talk to him. He did cough quite a bit, and his voice sounds really dry. I don't think he has whitecough, but I do want to treat him."

"What can I do to help?" Sheer Mountain asked urgently, wanting to do anything she could to help.

"You could help me gather some herbs." Owlpaw suggested. "I have plenty of tansy here, but since I also take it we'll want more. If possible, I'd also like to get some catmint just in case."

"Where do you find catmint?" Sheer Mountain questioned.

"Twolegplace." Owlpaw replied. "It usually grows in twoleg gardens."

"We should head out now." Sheer Mountain mewed. "The twolegplace is a long walk from here."

"Let me tell Earthpelt where I'm going." Owlpaw quickly ran over to her mentor and explained that she was going out before returning to Sheer Mountain. "Let's get going." The two she-cats ventured out into the fields and started out getting the tansy. Sheer Mountain had come to this place a couple times with Owlpaw as she knew the she-cat took the herb quite frequently.

Owlpaw grabbed some tansy and wrapped it in a large oak leaf to make it easier to carry. "Let's start heading to the twolegplace." They began the long walk to the twolegplace and Sheer Mountain noticed that Owlpaw was being rather quiet. *She's probably worried about my answer.* Sheer Mountain felt a twinge of guilt that she was taking so long to decide.

She had seen Owlapw arguing with Slatepaw often, and Slatepaw clearly did not like Sheer Mountain very much. *They all know that I'm the one hindering their mission.* Sheer Mountain needed to make a choice, she didn't want Owlpaw's friends to turn on her.

I just don't know the right choice to make. Sheer Mountain thought, dragging her tail through the field.

"Hey, Owlpaw?" Sheer Mountain spoke up.

"Yeah?" Owlpaw looked over her shoulder curiously.

"Are your friends...getting angry with me for not making a decision yet? Are *you* getting angry with me?"

Owlpaw thought for a moment which made Sheer Mountain nervous. "I'm definitely not angry with you. I told you to take your time. The only one who's really annoyed is Slatepaw, but he's never happy. The others might be getting impatient, but I know they will allow you the time to decide."

"I'm sorry this is taking me so long, it's just--it's not an easy choice to make."

"I understand." Owlpaw's voice was reassuring. "You'd be completely changing your life, which is why I'm giving you so much time. You'll make the decision when the time is right."

I just hope I make the right one. Sheer Mountain added silently and decided to end their conversation. After a long walk, the two of them finally reached the edge of the twolegplace. "Raptor is dead," Sheer Mountain spoke up. "But there could still be rouges around. Stay with me."

"Right." Owlpaw nodded and the two of them crept closer to the twolegplace, Sheer Mountain made sure to stay on alert while Owlpaw searched for herbs. She sniffed the air and examined various twoleg gardens.

"Oh, hold on." Owlpaw ducked underneath a fence and ran into a twoleg garden. Sheer Mountain rushed after her and followed closely.

"You can't just go rushing into twoleg gardens. Some kittypets could be dangerous, not to mention dogs."

"Sorry." Owlpaw dropped her ears and motioned towards an herb. "That's sorrel. It helps to build appetite."

"That sounds good." Sheer Mountain mewed and watched over as Owlpaw gathered some of the sorrel. The two of them swiftly left the garden and continued on the search for catmint.

They wandered deeper into the twolegplace which made Sheer Mountain quite nervous until Owlpaw stopped. "I can smell it." She lifted her muzzle into the air. "It's this way." Sheer Mountain followed close by, now carrying both bundles of herbs. Sheer Mountain could also smell the catmint being carried on the wind.

"Be careful." Sheer Mountain called to Owlpaw, following her close behind.

Owlpaw was more cautions this time, looking around for signs of

other life before ducking under the fence and moving towards the catmint. "We won't take much." Owlpaw reported before beginning to pick some of the herb.

"What are you doing?" An unfamiliar voice spoke, making Sheer Mountain tense and usheathe her claws. She looked up to ser a brown kittypet poking her head out of the upper window of the twoleg nest.

"Sorry." Owlpaw called. "I just need some of this catmint."

"Catmint?" The she-cat tilted her head. "Don't you mean catnip?"

Owlpaw seemed confused but Sheer Mountain stepped forward. "Yes, we need some if you don't mind."

"I'm not bothered." The kittypet replied. "My housefolk grows it for all the cats around here. Take as much as you need."

"Thank you." Owlpaw dipped her head and began gathering the herb.

"What do you need it for, if you don't mind me asking?" The kittypet questioned.

"It helps heal sick cats." Sheer Mountain explained quickly.

"Really? Most cats just like how it tastes."

"Yes." Sheer Mountain nodded. "It should be able to help my father."

"Well I wish you luck." The she-cat purred kindly. "If you ever need some more, feel free to come by. My name is Cocoa."

"Thank you, Cocoa." Sheer Mountain thanked the kittypet once more and the two of them left the garden with plenty of catmint.

"Let's get back home now." Owlpaw said as she wrapped the catmint up in another leaf. "The sooner we get this to your father the better."

Sheer Mountain nodded and the two of them began racing back to

the cavern. *I hope this is enough to treat him.* Sheer Mountain thought. *Please just let this be a simple cough.*

Chapter 6

Owlpaw heard rain pouring outside, large raindrops splashing against the roof of the cave. She could also hear coughing, through the darkness she a flash of golden eyes. *Sheer Mountain.* Owlpaw's eyes opened suddenly, she was still in her nest and there was no rain. *A dream?* She lifted her head slowly, letting out a yawn as she shook off sleep. Her Clanmates with the exception of Berryheart who was sitting watch outside, were asleep.

Owlpaw sat up in her nest, looking towards the cavern entrance. The sunlight was still dim outside, barely rising over the clouds. Owlpaw stepped out of her nest and padded slowly to the cavern entrance. Just outside sat Berryheart, the MoonClan she-cat looked very tired.

"You could probably get some sleep." Owlpaw mewed once she spotted her.

"Thanks, Owlpaw." Berryheart yawned and moved into the cavern to get some rest. Owlpaw was clearly the only one awake in the cave. The air was brisk, biting at her eartips. *The cold season is approaching quickly.* She looked towards Sheer Mountain cave. *She's worried about making us mad.* Owlpaw thought. *I told her to take her time, but I don't want leafbare to slow us down. Not to mention...* Owlpaw walked across the cavern, glancing up at the sky as she did.

It was barely dawn, the sky still rather dark with only hints of sunlight. *I'll just check quickly.* Owlpaw padded over to the den and poked her head inside. Sheer Mountain was curled up in her nest with the kits around her. Sparrow was cuddled up against Sheer Mountain's stomach, Finch was sprawled out against her other flank and Wren was laying across Sheer Mountain's shoulders.

Owlpaw let out a small laugh at the sight of it then turned to the other resident of this den. Tumbleweed was curled up in his nest. Through the faint sunlight, Owlpaw could see just how dull his pelt

was. His fur was thinning and Owlpaw could see his ribs. She was starting to get genuinely concerned about the old tom.

He still had a raspy, dry cough that would completely halt whatever he was doing. Owlpaw watched his breathing and noticed it was slow and raged. He let out a couple coughs, but didn't wake. He had no appetite, and even though he tried to eat he often couldn't keep it down. He had no energy and spent most of the time in his den.

It had been nearly four days since Owlpaw and Sheer Mountain got catmint and it hadn't done anything. She tried tansy and fennel, which also did nothing. She kept giving him sorrel to try and quell his hunger, but he needed actual prey. Owlpaw felt so helpless, like she couldn't do anything to cure Tumbleweed's ailment. *If only I was an actual medicine cat.*

She was running out of ideas, she didn't know what Sheer Mountain would think of her if she let Tumbleweed die. *There has to be something I can do.* Owlpaw stepped out of the cavern and looked up towards the sky as the stars faded away. *Mosscloud used to be a medicine cat.* She looked over her shoulder towards the outlook where Sheer Mountain's mother died. *Maybe tonight I can try and ask for help from Mosscloud. She'll know what to do.*

Owlpaw's stomach growled, she let out a low sigh and padded over to the fresh-kill to eat a small mouse. Anxiety clawed at her chest, she didn't like not knowing what to do. *Tumbleweed is running out of time. I just hope that he is able to last the rest of the day.*

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As the sun rose, the day followed and Owlpaw's travelmates exited the cavern and started preparing for the day. The first ones out of Sheer Mountain's cavern were the kits, chasing after one another and full of energy. Sheer Mountain wasn't far behind, she stepped out into the open air and yawned. She looked incredibly tired. *Did she not sleep well?* Owlpaw had figured out that whatever Tumbleweed had, it wasn't contagious as Sheer Mountain nor any of the kits had showed any symptoms in the entire time that Tumbleweed had been sick.

This isn't greencough. Owlpaw had realized. She had never been around greencough, but she heard enough stories to know how it worked. She had asked Earthpelt about the sickness that had killed a former SunClan warrior named Snakewhisker, and she said that it wasn't the same.

Owlpaw realized that Sheer Mountain was walked up to her. Owlapw braced herself for the conversation. "There doesn't seem to be any change in my father." Sheer Mountain replied, his voice dry from exhaustion.

"Did you sleep last night?"

"A little bit." Sheer Mountain dropped her head. "I'm just so sick with worry I couldn't stay asleep. Not to mention the kits are getting a little restless. It may be time for them to get their own nest." Sheer Mountain sighed. "Any ideas on what to do with my father?"

"I'm not sure." Owlpaw shuffled her paws. "Tonight I was going to try something..."

"What's that?" *I wonder how she'll take it.*

"I was going to go the cliff and try and see if I could get some answers from Mosscloud...she was a medicine cat when she was alive."

Disbelief flashed in Sheer Mountain's eyes for a moment, but it didn't linger. "If you think it will help. Nothing else seems to be working." He voice sounded so defeated. *I have to do this. Maybe if Mosscloud can tell me what to do, it will convince Sheer Mountain to open her heart to StarClan.*

Owlpaw suddenly felt slightly hopeful. "I'll do everything I can, Sheer Mountain." Owlpaw promised. She just had to wait for night to arrive, and hope that Mosscloud had the answers. *If she doesn't, I'm not sure what I'll do.*

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Owlpaw looked up at the dark sky, the stars shimmering overhead.

The moon was filled the cavern with a silver light. The moon was so large, it was nearly full. *We've been gone for nearly three moons now.* Owlpaw breathed out a sigh and started heading away from the cavern.

"Where are you going, Owlpaw?" Earthpelt questioned.

"I'm going to the overlook." Owlpaw replied. "I'm going to try and connect with Mosscloud so she can help me treat Tumbleweed."

"Do you think she'll be able to help?" Seedclaw checked.

"I'm not sure." Owlpaw admitted. "She was a medicine cat while she was alive, and if she can then it could be what I need to convince Sheer Mountain to open up her mind to StarClan."

"Then I wish you luck." Earthpelt dipped her head. "Stay warm out there."

Owlpaw gave a small nod and started padding towards the overlook. The night was chilly, but she would live. She reached the cliff and looked up at the stars in wonder. *It's so beautiful up here.* She curled up into a ball and closed her eyes. *Please, Mosscloud. I need your guidance.*

A few short moments passed and Owlpaw opened up her eyes and saw a shimmering tortoiseshell pelt sitting at the cliff edge. "Mosscloud!" Owlpaw exclaimed and she jumped to her paws. "You actually came to me."

"Of course, Owlpaw." Mosscloud rose to her paws and turned to face Owlpaw. "I could tell you needed guidance."

"Then you can help me? What's wrong with Tumbleweed? How do I cure his illness."
Mosscloud's eyes betrayed nothing, they were almost emotionless. "Owlpaw, if you chose to follow the path of medicine cat then there is something you need to learn."

"What's that?" Owlpaw felt uncomfortable by the tone of her voice.

"That you can't save every cat you treat." Owlpaw's blood turned to

ice. *No.*

"What are you talking about?"

"Some illnesses cannot be cured. Tumbleweed has something inside of him that is killing him, and no herbs can cure it." Mosscloud's voice was level, not showing any fear.

Owlpaw's claws scraped against the stone. "No! There has to be *something* I can do!" Owlpaw wailed. "I'm supposed to be earning Sheer Mountain's trust, what will she think if I tell her that there's nothing I can do for her father? She'll hate me!"

"She won't hate you." Mosscloud assured Owlpaw, her expression now shifting to show pity. "Sheer Mountain will be upset and torn over the loss of her father, but she will be able to overcome this."

"I can't just *give up.*" Owlpaw mewed, feeling broken inside. "I couldn't live with myself. If I can't treat him then what am I supposed to do? Just let him die?"

"You can ease his pain." Mosscloud explained. "Line his nest with lavender to soothe him, treat his symptoms and give him poppy seeds to ease the pain. He will pass eventually, and you'll have to allow him to pass without fear or pain."

"I can't." Owlpaw dropped her head. "I *can't* give up." Owlpaw raised her voice. "I will do *everything* I can to save Tumbleweed. That's what medicine cat's do right?"

"I'm warning you now, Owlpaw." Mosscloud sighed sadly. "That kind of attitude is admirable, but when you convince yourself that you can save someone who is unsavable, then you're setting yourself up for pain."

"I don't care." Owlpaw argued. "I'm going to be a medicine cat and medicine cats save lives!"

"I wish you luck, Owlpaw." Mosscloud padded over to Owlpaw and rested her muzzle on Owlpaw's head. "I will be watching over you."

Chapter 7

"Blossompaw, you're next." Mudfall instructed and Blossompaw dropped into a battle stance, widening her legs and keeping herself sturdy. She faced Bluepaw whose eyes sparked with excitement. She ran over everything in her mind, what the mentors had explained to her as well as what she had watched Oakpaw and Snowpaw do. *I can do this.*

Blossompaw charged forward, going straight for Bluepaw's shoulders. She powered energy into her hind legs and gave a leap. Her forepaws landed on Bluepaw's lower back, the weight making Bluepaw's hind legs give out. Blossompaw stumbled forward and slipped off Bluepaw's back, landing on her paws behind the apprentice. *Fox-dung!* She swore and flicked her tail in annoyance.

"You jumped too far." Mudfall pointed out. *I'm well aware of that.* She rose to her paws. "You're over estimating your target. It's important to judge your enemies as you fight them."

Blossompaw flattened her ears for a moment and rose to her paws, facing Bluepaw once again. "Let me try again." Blossompaw mewed boldly. *I need less power in my jump.* She dropped into a crouch and leapt again. This time she landed safely on Bluepaw's back. She used her forepaws to grip Bluepaw's shoulders and throw her off balance.

Bluepaw resisted and Blossompaw struggled, but eventually she got Bluepaw to fall over on her side. Blossompaw was unable to get off and fell to the ground along with Bluepaw. "Better." Mudfall gave a small nod. "But your reaction time is slow." Blossompaw's pelt burned as all the other apprentices watched her.

She was training along with her brothers as well as Snowpaw and Windpaw as well as their mentors. *I'm the only one who can't get this.* Blossompaw wanted to try again, but she didn't know if she could stand the embarrassment again. "Why don't you have a go, Rushpaw." Hollystorm encouraged.

Blossompaw sat down, staring at her paws while Rushpaw padded up to face Windpaw. Blossompaw watched her brother, hoping to possibly learn something. Oakpaw was such a natural when it came to fighting, and while Rushpaw wasn't as much of a natural, he learned quickly. Blossompaw was a sharp hunter, but she struggled with fighting more than her brothers.

She watched Rushpaw as he crouched down and face Windpaw. He jumped just the same as Blossompaw did, but he seemed more graceful. He landed on Windpaw's shoulders and knocked the she-cat down before jumping easily to the side. "Very good, Rushpaw." Hollystorm praised and Blossompaw continued to stew. *I did the exact same thing as him.* She thought bitterly. *Why did he do it so much better than me?*

"That's enough training for today." Falconheart spoke up, rising to his paws. "We need to prepare for the gathering soon." *But I'm the only one who failed.* Blossompaw thought sadly but didn't argue. The apprentices gathered and Blossompaw walked slowly behind the others, dragging her tail through the grass and leaves.

"Don't feel bad, Blossompaw." Rushpaw spoke, falling in beside her. "You'll get it soon enough." The pity in her brother's eyes made Blossompaw feel incredibly annoyed. *I don't want sympathy.* Blossompaw held her tongue, despite wanting to tell her brother to leave her alone. *Is this what Owlpaw feels like?* Blossompaw suddenly missed her sister even more. *I bet Owlpaw would understand.* She dropped her head. She watched Bluepaw, Windpaw and Snowpaw all laughing together. Rushpaw left Blossompaw's side, clearly realizing she wasn't in the mood to talk and approached Oakpaw.

I love my brothers. Blossompaw noted. *But I wish I had my sister.* The bond between sisters was unlike anything else, it was something that she just couldn't share with Rushpaw and Oakpaw. *We have our own bond, but I miss Owlpaw so much.* She glanced up towards the sky as the sun slowly began to dip behind the mountains. *Please come home soon.*

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Blossompaw quickly swallowed her prey, desperately trying to erase

her self-disappointment before the gathering. She hadn't been to a gathering since the one before Owlpaw left, and she was genuinely excited about going tonight. She hoped it would pull her mind away from all of her troubles.

She glanced over to the nursery where Falconheart was now talking to Sedgefern and their kits. They were still rather still, mostly just sleeping and eating at Sedgefern's belly. They had all been given names as well. The only she-cat, the little gray kit was named Juniperkit. The pale golden brown tom had been named Oatkit, and the spiky furred tom had been named Thistlekit.

Blossompaw wanted to play with them but they were still to young. *I helped bring those little kits into the world.* Blossompaw thought proudly. *I want to spend time with them and see them grow!*

Blossompaw finally finished her sparrow and discarded the remains in time to begin gathering with the Clan before leaving for the hollow. Blossompaw gathered with Oakpaw and Rushpaw. "I've been waiting for this." Oakpaw puffed out his chest. "Last time I was barely an apprentice, now I wanna show off how much I've learned."

"I don't think the other Clans will be eager to listen to some SunClan apprentie boast about how great he is." Rushpaw pointed out with a flick of his tail.

"They'll look at me and just *know* how great I am." Blossompaw laughed and shook her head. *Oakpaw lives in his own little world.* Blossompaw thought. She was glad her brother had such confidence, but she feared it would get him in trouble one day.

"Are we ready?" Dawnstar spoke up, looking over the Clan. When the Clan confirmed, Dawnstar and Cinderflame led SunClan into the forest. Blossompaw used this walk to clear her mind, she didn't want to fret about her mistakes earlier in the day or spend it worrying about Owlpaw. *This is a time for peace.* Blossompaw reminded herself and kept walking with her head high.

They reached the gathering hollow and AshClan had already arrived, but Blossompaw could see LichenClan arriving just behind

them. "Good evening, Riverstar." Dawnstar bowed her head at the AshClan leader. "How's the hunting?"

"It's well, thank you." Riverstar dipped her head in return. "How about SunClan?"

"Good." Dawnstar purred and both leaders turned to Timberstar. "Greetings, Timberstar."

"Dawnstar." He dipped his head. "Riverstar." The three leaders began talking and not long after, Shadowstar arrived with MoonClan. Blossompaw hung near her brothers as Oakpaw started searching for apprentices to talk to. He stumbled across a black MoonClan tom and introduced himself.

"Hi there." Oakpaw boasted. "My name is Oakpaw of SunClan and these are my siblings, Blossompaw and Rushpaw."

"Hi." The tom greeted. "My name is Ripplepaw. It's nice to meet you."

"Do you have any siblings?" Rushpaw questioned.

"Just a sister." Ripplepaw replied. "Her name is Leopardpaw, and she was one of the cats chosen to go on the mission."

"Our sister is too!" Blossompaw exclaimed. "Her name is Owlpaw."

"That's really cool." Ripplepaw's eyes sparkled slightly. "I hope they come home soon, I miss Leopardpaw a lot."

"I know how you feel." Blossompaw lowered her ears. "I miss Owlpaw everyday, I worry about her so much." Blossompaw felt her brother's eyes resting on her. "I know she's stronger than she looks, but she's my sister you know? She could be the strongest cat in the whole forest but I'd still worry about her."

"I feel the same way." Ripplepaw sighed. "Leopardpaw and I were barely apprentices when she left, but I trust the others to keep her safe." *I'm glad there's another cat who feels the same way.* Blossompaw thought gratefully. *I know that Rushpaw and Oakpaw are worried about Owlpaw as well, but it doesn't seem to be effecting them as much.*

"If we're all ready," Riverstar's voice rang out through the hollow. Blossompaw looked towards the large stone in the center. "Then let us get started with the gathering."

"It was nice talking to you." Blossompaw told Ripplepaw and along with her siblings towards the SunClan tree.

"You know that Owlpaw is going to be okay, right?" Rushpaw mewed quietly. "She'll be home soon enough."

"I know." Blossompaw sighed. "I just miss her so much."

"I do too." Rushpaw's voice became sad. "But she's out exploring the world and she will be home soon, I know it." Blossompaw felt reassured by her brother's words and the two of them sat down to watch the gathering begin.

"Shadowstar," Timberstar mewed. "Why don't you get us started?"

"Very well," Shadowstar raised his head. "A few days ago we lost our beloved elder Brambleflight. He passed due to his old age and we honored his long life and wisdom." There was a moment of silence for the fallen MoonClan elder. "Despite his death, MoonClan is doing well as the rivers continue to be full of fish and the moors healthy with rabbits."

"Sorry to hear about Brambleflight." Timberstar dipped his head and rose to his paws, taking his turn.

"LichenClan doesn't have much to report, our prey is running well and we are thriving." Timberstar explained quickly before sitting back down and next was Dawnstar.

"Earlier this moon, our queen Sedgefern gave birth to three kits. We happily welcome Juniperkit, Oatkit and Thistlekit as the newest members of SunClan. Our Clan is thriving and we have plenty of full bellies."

Cheers rang out for the newborn kits and it was finally Riverstar's turn. "AshClan happily welcomes three new apprentices, Otterpaw, Russetpaw and Larchpaw." The Clans cheered for new apprentices. "AshClan is thriving as well during these times, our strength

continues to grow." After the cheering died down, Riverstar continued. "I wanted to ask if any of the other medicine cats have had any signs about our journeying cats."

"Last time I spoke to StarClan," Oneflight spoke up. "All that they could tell me was they are safe."

"That's better than nothing I suppose." Riverstar sighed. "I just hope they're close to returning."

Blossompaw stared at her paws, hope sparking in her chest. *At least I know that Owlpaw is safe, just please,* She glanced towards the moon, knowing somewhere that Owlpaw was looking at the same moon. *Please come home soon, sister.*

Chapter 8

Owlpaw stared up sadly at the full moon, her heart aching. *The gathering is taking place right now.* She thought. *I wonder how the Clans are doing. What news is being shared?* Owlpaw closed her eyes and let out a slow breath. She thought about her family, she hoped that her siblings' training was going well. *I hope Oakpaw's arrogance isn't getting him into trouble.* She chuckled to herself before staring over the scene below. The river flowing slowly towards the ground.

She had been spending a lot of time up here, when she felt like she couldn't do anything. She gave Tumbleweed just about every herb she could think of several times a day but nothing was getting better.

With each passing day the old tom grew weaker and thinner, for the past few days he hadn't even moved from his nest. *I'm running out of time.* Owlpaw tried to hold back her fears. *Tumbleweed is dying and there's nothing I can do about it.* She felt as if she was losing complete control of everything. *How can I be a medicine cat if I can't treat one illness?*

"Are you thinking about the gathering too?" Owlpaw heard a gentle voice behind her and she turned to see Leopardpaw standing near the entrance to the overlook.

"Yeah." Owlpaw replied. *Among other things.*

"I miss home a lot." Leopardpaw sat down next to her. "I miss my brother."

"I miss my siblings too." Owlpaw replied, though her heart wasn't in the conversation.

"You're worried about something else, huh?" Owlpaw looked at Leopardpaw. "I know that Tumbleweed is sick, how bad is it?"

"Pretty bad." Owlpaw sighed. "He's not getting any better and I don't

know what to do."

"Did you ask Mosscloud? Are you able to contact her at all?"

"Yeah I did." Owlpaw shifted her paws. "She told me that there was nothing I can do, but I just--I just *can't* accept that. I'm supposed to be the one getting Sheer Mountain to agree to become our leader, how can I do that if I just let her father die?"

"I don't really know anything about what its like to be a medicine cat." Leopardpaw mewed. "But regardless of what happens, I think Sheer Mountain will be grateful that you did everything you could."

Owlpaw dropped her head. "I don't want to think about multiple options, the only option to me is getting Tumbleweed better." She glanced back up at the stars. "I just wish I had some guidance. I'm not a medicine cat. I had a little bit of training but I'm not trained enough to do this. He would probably be fine in the paws of a real medicine cat."

"Mosscloud was a medicine cat right?" Owlpaw nodded. "She says that there's nothing you can do, you might have to trust her."

"I don't want to." Owlpaw's voice cracked. "I'll do everything I can to save Tumbleweed's life, no matter what."

"To me," Leopardpaw rested her tail on Owlpaw's tail. "That sounds like something a real medicine cat would say."

Owlpaw was slightly warmed by Leopardpaw's words. "Thank you, Leopardpaw." Owlpaw mewed quietly. *It's nice to have some support.* She thought about Slatepaw and winced slightly. *Leopardpaw is much better than him.* "I should go check on Tumbleweed." Owlpaw rose to her paws. "He needs more herbs anyway."

"Let me know if you need any help." Leopardpaw offered and the two of them returned to the cavern. It was mostly empty as a lot of the warriors with the exception of Berryheart and Leopardpaw were out hunting and that included Sheer Mountain.

Leopardpaw went to her mentor and the two of them began talking. Owlpaw looked in the center of the cavern where Finch, Wren and

Sparrow were all napping together in the rays of sunlight.

Owlpaw padded into her den and started nosing through her herbs. She grabbed some tansy and even if she didn't want to follow Mosscloud's advice, she had gathered some lavender as well, she had been lining his nest with it to try and keep him relaxed. The last thing she grabbed was some sorrel and headed to Tumbleweed's den.

Inside, Owlpaw winced at the sharp scent of illness that hung like a cloud in the air. Owlpaw slowly approached Tumbleweed who was curled up in his nest. Through the pale light that came in through the cave entrance, she could see how dull, matted and thin his pelt had become. His breathing was slow and ragged, Owlpaw could plainly see his bones through his pelt.

Owlpaw was surprised when Tumbleweed weakly lifted his head. "More herbs?" He questioned, his voice raw and dry from coughing. Owlpaw nodded and set the herbs down at his nest.

Tumbleweed stared at the herbs, his eyes were glossed over with no light or energy in them. Owlpaw sat down and worked more lavender into his nest. She finished and realized that Tumbleweed hadn't touched his herbs.

"Is something wrong?"

"I just--" He coughed. "I don't know if I have the energy to eat those."

"You have to." Owlpaw urged. "You need these herbs."

"Owlpaw," Tumbleweed rested his chin on his paws, his eyes closing halfway. "You and I both know what's going to happen."

Owlpaw rose to her paws, panic forming in her chest. "No," She shook her head. "I won't accept it. I told myself I would do *everything* could."

"And you have." Tumbleweed glanced at her, despite how bleak his eyes were, she could see still his genuine kindness burning deep in them. "I appreciate everything you've done." He let out a ragged

breath. "For a while, I was so scared that this would kill me. I was scared of death, scared of leaving Sheer Mountain behind, but she's all grown up isn't she? She may not have given birth to them, but she has three little kits that I've been proud to call my grandchildren. I built my life around her, but she's no kit anymore. I've gotten older, and my time is up and I'm okay with that."

Owlpaw's legs shook. "Well I'm not." She whimpered. "I can't do that to Sheer Mountain, I *have* to save you. I won't stop until I do." *This can't be happening. I won't give up, I promised myself I wouldn't.*

"You've made my last few days wonderful." Tumbleweed purred. "I've never met a cat like you, and I'm so glad I had the chance to meet you and your friends." He looked towards the cave exit. "I don't know exactly what's going on, but I know that Sheer Mountain is somehow important to you Clan cats." His eyes began to slowly shut.

"No!" Owlpaw wailed. "You can't die!" Her legs gave out and Owlpaw slumped over, dropping her head. "You *can't.* Sheer Mountain isn't here to say goodbye."

"Say goodbye for me." Tumbleweed's voice was weaker. "Tell her that I love her so much, and that's she capable of such incredible things."

Owlpaw's body shook with grief, she rested her muzzle on Tumbleweed's forehead. "I'm so sorry. You shouldn't have to say goodbye to her."

"Don't be sorry." Tumbleweed's breathing was getting slower. "I'm ready for this." He breathed out slowly. "I'm coming Star." With his words spoken, Tumbleweed's breathing came to a stop.

Owlpaw's entire body began shaking. *I failed.* Owlpaw had failed, she tried so hard to save Tumbleweed, to cure his illness and it had all been for nothing. *I'm such a failure. I'm no medicine cat.*

The sudden sound of Sheer Mountain's voice outside in the cavern turned Owlpaw's blood to ice. *What am I going to do?* She shook in pure panic next to Tumbleweed's lifeless body. *I can't do this. I failed*

her. She's going to hate me, I let her father die. "Father are you--" Sheer Mountain broke off as she met Owlpaw's grief stricken gaze. "Owlpaw?"

Please go back. Owlpaw pleaded silently. *Turn around, Sheer Mountain. Go back to hunting. Please.* Sheer Mountain could clearly read Owlpaw's expression. "Owlpaw, talk to me!" Owlpaw winced. "What happened?" Sheer Mountain ran up to Tumbleweed and Owlpaw jumped back. "Tumbleweed?" Sheer Mountain questioned, looked at her father's body. "Father please!" She wailed. Owlpaw slowly stepped backwards. *It's my fault. I failed her.* "What happened?" Sheer Mountain's head snapped up. "How did this happen?"

"I-I-" Owlpaw felt as if her throat was closing.

"Didn't you give him herbs? I thought you were taking care of him?" Sheer Mountain's voice got louder and Owlpaw felt herself getting smaller.

"Sheer Mountain--" Owlpaw ducked her head, she couldn't look at Sheer Mountain anymore. "I-I'm so sorry." She couldn't breathe, her chest tightened and she couldn't handle the look Sheer Mountain was giving her. "I failed, I--" She choked on her words. "I was wrong. I'm no medicine cat."

Owlpaw tore into a spring and ran past Sheer Mountain. *I can't do this. I can't face her.* Owlpaw sprinted past the other Clan cats without slowing down. "Owlpaw!" Earthpelt called after her, but Owlpaw could barely hear here. *I failed. I failed. I failed.* Owlpaw repeated over and over in her head. *I should have never came on this mission. Dawnstar chose wrong.*

Chapter 9

Sheer Mountain stood frozen in shock, unable to process what was happening. It felt as if her entire world had shattered in a few short moments. Just moments again she was hunting with the Clan cats and enjoying the sunny day. Then she came home. She walked into Tumbleweed's cavern to check in on her father when she saw Owlpaw.

The moment she saw the young she-cat she knew something was wrong. Her eyes were wide with pain and fear, her entire body was shaking and she looked horrified. Then Sheer Mountain had looked passed Owlpaw and saw her father's lifeless body. Sheer Mountain had been overcome by grief and shock and she had lost her cool.

She had so many questions about what happened, and perhaps she had take out some of her anger and shock on Owlpaw which caused her to sprint out of the den, leaving Sheer Mountain standing alone in shock.

She stared down at her father, her legs shaking. *How could this happen?* Sheer Mountain sat down and buried her muzzle into her father's pelt. "Why?" Sheer Mountain whimpered. "Why did you have to leave me?" He body shook. "You're my father, you always gave me all the answers, you always made me laugh, how can you just be...gone." Sheer Mountain lifted her head, sobbing. "How can I do this without you?"

She laid down next to her father. "How can I just say goodbye to you? You were always there for me. When my mother died, when I found those kits, everything. You taught me how to hunt, you taught me how to be brave. You taught me how to be a good mother." She breathed in the scent of her father, never wanting to forget it. "I don't want to say goodbye."

For a moment she was a kit again, hiding in the safety of her father's pelt. For so long it had been the two of them, after Star died it had just been her and her father. He protected her from

everything that scared her, from viscous rouges to the nightmares that would plague her at night.

He would guide her when she was lost, and he would make her laugh whenever she was sad. When she brought home three half-dead kits, soaked to the bone, he made a nest for them and showed Sheer Mountain how to be a mother to them. *How am I supposed to tell them?* Sheer Mountain rested her chin on the top of Tumbleweed's head. "I don't want to do this without you. What do I do now? I feel so confused, am I supposed to go with the Clan cats? Or do I stay here, where my parents died. What do I do?" She wailed. "Father please, I need your answers. Tell me what to do." Her voice broke off. "What do I do?" She whispered.

"Sheer Mountain?" Sheer Mountain lifted her head weakly and saw the silhouette of a cat standing at the cave entrance. Sheer Mountain shakily rose to her paws and walked up to see Seedclaw looking in the cave. "Do you know why Owlpaw ran out of here?"

Sheer Mountain looked over her shoulder at Tumbleweed's body for a moment, preparing to speak the next set of words. "Yeah," She cleared her throat. "My father is dead. Owlpaw was...upset." *And I didn't help.* Now that Sheer Mountain had calmed down a little, she had realized just how cruel she had been to Owlpaw.

"I'm so sorry." Seedclaw dropped his head. "He was a wonderful cat, even in the short time I've known him, I knew that much."

Emotion choked Sheer Mountain's throat and she let out a shaky breath. "Where is Owlpaw?"

"She ran out of the cavern, Earthpelt went after her. None of us knew what was going on." Seedclaw explained. "So I came to check on you."

"I wasn't fair to her." Sheer Mountain admitted. "I need to apologize."

"She seemed rather hysterical." Seedclaw sighed. "I would let Earthpelt try and handle her first. I think you need to tell the kits what happened."

Sheer Mountain froze for a moment. "Are they awake?"

Seedclaw nodded. "They wanted to come see you but Leafdawn suspected something bad happened and she kept them back."

"Thank you." Sheer Mountain took a deep breath, pain choking her heart. *I can do this.* She stepped past Seedclaw and saw the three kits sitting with Leafdawn. *Maybe I can't.* Wren spotted her first and ran over to her in glee, breaking Sheer Mountain's heart even further. She sat down as the three kits cuddled up to her.

"Is everything okay, Sheer Mountain?" Finch questioned, tilting his head. "You look so sad."

"Well," Sheer Mountain kept her voice low, taking in her kits close with her tail. "You know how Tumbleweed has been so sick lately?" They nodded. "Well sometimes, when cats get sick, they can't get better. Tumbleweed couldn't get better, so he had to leave us."

"He left?" Wren questioned with a small squeak. "Where did he go?"

"He went to my mother." Sheer Mountain's voice cracked. "He's with her now, safe."

"Did he go to the stars?" Sheer Mountain looked at Sparrow in surprise. "I heard the Clan cats talking about cats in the stars. Is that where he went?"

The stars. Sheer Mountain thought for a moment the nodded. "Yes, Sparrow. Tumbleweed is in the stars now. He's not sick anymore, he's happy with my mother. Where he always belonged."

"Will we see him again?" Finch asked.

"Someday." Sheer Mountain promised. "Someday you'll see him again, and he'll be so happy to see you. He loved you all so much, just like I do." She buried her muzzle into her kits. "I'm so sorry you had to lose him."

"I'm sorry you lost him." Wren mewed quietly. "I don't like seeing you hurt so much, it makes me sad."

"I'll be okay, Wren." Sheer Mountain promised. "And so will you three. I promise." It didn't take long for news of Tumbelweed's death to spread to every cat in the cavern. Sheer Mountain stayed with her kits and after a few moments, Owlpaw and Earthpelt returned. Sheer Mountain met Owlpaw's gaze for just a moment before the she-cat's eyes flashed with pain and she rushed into the cave where she slept. *I need to apologize.* Sheer Mountain thought, but she couldn't bring herself to leave her kits' side.

Together, Sheer Mountain, her kits, Nettle and the Clan cats all sat a vigil for Tumbleweed. They set his body under the rising moon and Sheer Mountain stared at her father's body for a long time, feeling hopeless. *What am I going to do without you?*

When the vigil ended, she was approached by Seedclaw and Leafdawn. "In a Clan, its usually the elders who bury the dead, but I figured you would want to help us." Sheer Mountain nodded.

"I know where he would want to be buried."

Seedclaw and Leafdawn carried Tumbleweed's body out of the cavern and Sheer Mountain led them to a special place. It was beneath the overlook, where Star had been buried. "This is my mother's grave." Sheer Mountain explained. "He would want to be next to her."

The three cats got to work and after a while, Tumbleweed's body was buried under the earth, next to Star. It still didn't feel right, it felt like a wound burning across her heart. Sheer Mountain walked slowly behind Seedclaw and Leafdawn as they returned to the cavern.

"Are you alright, Sheer Mountain?" Leafdawn questioned with concern.

"I don't know." Sheer Mountain admitted. "I think I just need some time alone."

"Very well." Seedclaw dipped his head and the two Clan cats returned without her. She sat down on the overlook, her mind an endless storm of numbing pain. She knew her kits were sleeping

safely in the cavern, but she didn't think she could sleep tonight.

She found herself underneath the stars, shimmering overhead. Sheer Mountain stared up at the sparkling sky. *Is it true? Are you in the stars?* Sheer Mountain really wished it was. "I don't know what to do." Sheer Mountain spoke aloud. "What am I supposed to do now? How do i go on without him? These Clan cats want me to follow some destiny, to lead some Clan, but I've never felt so lost."

Sheer Mountain slumped over. "You want me to open up my mind?" She raised her voice. "Fine. I'm opening up my mind to StarClan, show me something, *anything.* Tell me what I'm supposed to do! Because I feel so helpless right now, I need someone to tell me the right thing to do."

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Sheer Mountain didn't realize that she had fallen asleep. She lifted her head slowly, her body aching slightly from the cold stone. *Figures.* Sheer Mountain thought bitterly as she rose to her paws. *I'll have to find my own answers.* She turned away to leave when a voice suddenly spoke to her.

"It's easy to see why your mother liked this place so much." Sheer Mountain whipped around in alarm seeing an unfamiliar cat sitting on the outlook edge. It was a lean tortoiseshell she-cat, her pelt shimmered with starlight. *Impossible.* The she-cat rose to her paws and turned to face Sheer Mountain, her green eyes sparkling with the same stars that filled the sky. "I've been so eager to meet you, Sheer Mountain."

"Wh-who are you." Sheer Mountain demanded, shaking slightly.

"My name is Mosscloud. I am a former MoonClan medicine cat, and the guide for the Clan cats."

"Y-you're the one who gave them their mission." Mosscloud nodded. "And you're...real?"

"I am." Mosscloud purred. "I've been trying to reach you for a long time now."

"This is just--" Sheer Mountain shook her head. "How can I believe this? Maybe I'm just seeing things because I'm so grief stricken."

"I was worried you might think that." Mosscloud admitted. "So I brought someone else with me, someone you might want to listen to."

"What do you mean?" Mosscloud motioned with her head for Sheer Mountain to turn around. Confused, Sheer Mountain turned around and her heart froze. Standing a few lengths in front of Sheer Mountain was a beautiful she-cat, she had the same pelt as Sheer Mountain and the same golden eyes. Her pelt was lined with stars just as Mosscloud was.

Mother. Sheer Mountain was overwhelmed with emotion and raced towards her mother. She fell against her mother's pelt like she was a kit and Star buried her muzzle into Sheer Mountain's shoulder. "Oh, my sweet Sheer Mountain." Sheer Mountain breathed in her mother's scent and it brought her back to when she was a kit. *It's really her. It's really her!* "I've missed you so much."

"I can't believe this." Sheer Mountain whimpered. "I thought I would never see you again."

"I've always been watching over you." Star mewed silently, her sweet voice bringing Sheer Mountain back to a simpler time. "I've watch you grown, I've watched you raise those kits and I am so unbelievably proud of you."

"M-my father." Sheer Mountain pulled back. "Is he..."

"Tumbleweed is waiting for me to go get him." Star purred. "Just as Mosscloud found me." She looked towards the other Clan cat. "I've lived all this time at your side in the stars, until the Clan cats got there and I was able to meet Mosscloud. She told me about StarClan and everything about the Clans. It's been such a wonderful experience, she told me about your destiny as well."

Sheer Mountain stared at her paws. "Is that really was I'm supposed to do? How can I just completely change my life?"

"This is what you were born to do, Sheer Mountain." Star explained. "And I will be right there with you, as will your father. The kits will come with you, and you will lead a wonderful life as a Clan leader."

"You'll be there?" Sheer Mountain asked hopefully.

"I'll be at your side, watching over you and guiding you. As a Clan leader you'll be able to speak to me any time you need guidance."

Sheer Mountain stared at her mother and looked at Mosscloud. "Sheer Mountain, this is the life you were destined to live." Mosscloud mewed. "Destiny isn't always easy, my destiny was to form this Clan and I've been waiting for this moment."

Sheer Mountain stared at her paws. *My destiny.* She was enjoying the thought of being able to speak with her mother whenever she wanted. *We stayed in these mountains because my father didn't want to leave my mother's home.* Sheer Mountain thought. *But now they're both gone, and there's a whole world out there for me to see. For my kits to see.* "Alright then." Sheer Mountain sighed. *I have nothing else to do here.* "I'll do it."

Chapter 10

Sheer Mountain's eyes fluttered open and she raised her head slowly. She was back on the overlook after saying goodbye to her mother and Mosscloud. Her heart ached as she said farewell to her mother, she had been without her for so long. She slowly rosed to her paws and glanced towards the sky as the stars started to fade away from the sky with the sun taking their place.

She had made her decision, but she had something to take care of first. *Before you return.* Mosscloud had spoken. *You need to talk to Owlpaw. She is severely blaming herself for the loss of your father, I told her there was nothing she could do but she didn't want to believe me.*

Sheer Mountain had lashed out at Owlpaw for something that wasn't her fault. She felt so incredibly guilty about it, and she needed to make things right. Sheer Mountain left the overlook and into the cavern. She spotted Owlpaw sitting outside her cave, she honestly surprised to see the she-cat awake. It wasn't even dawn yet.

Owlpaw's blue eyes were distant and glazed over with exhaustion as she stared at her paws. Sheer Mountain once again felt guilt clawing at her. She slowly approached Owlpaw and she looked up, panic flashing in her eyes for a moment. She looked like she wanted to run away.

"Owlpaw," Sheer Mountain kept her voice calm. "Can I talk to you for a moment?"

"S-sure." Owlpaw rose to her paws, her legs shaking. The two of them sat to the side to talk.

"I wanted to apologize for the way I reacted." Sheer Mountain bowed her head shamefully. "You didn't deserve it, I know you did everything you could for my father and I'm so incredibly grateful for that. At least he died knowing that you tried, I know he would be grateful for that."

"Mosscloud told me..." Owlpaw whimpered. "She told me that I couldn't and I still tried..."

"And I appreciate that." Sheer Mountain rested her tail on Owlpaw's shoulder. "I am so grateful, my father lived a great life and now he's back with my mother. You are meant to be a medicine cat, I know you are." Owlpaw lifted her head weakly, she still didn't seem convinced. *Maybe this will make her feel better.* "Last night," Sheer Mountain spoke. "I was so desperate for answers, I felt loss without him so I went to the overlook and begged for answers." Owlpaw looked at her curiously. "And I was visited by Mosscloud and my mother."

Owlpaw's eyes went wide and suddenly she lit up with energy. "You were?"

Sheer Mountain nodded. "It was unlike anything else I've seen before. I was convinced I would never see my mother again, and there she was. The same as I remembered, it was incredible." Sheer Mountain felt herself getting emotional again. "She promised me she would be by my side the entire time." Owlpaw stared intently at her. *Does she know what I'm going to say?* "And that's why," Sheer Mountain took a deep breath. "I'll do it. I'll lead your Clan."

"You will?" Owlpaw jumped to her paws. "Oh my goodness, Sheer Mountain this is incredible." Her eyes shimmered with newfound energy. After a moment she calmed herself down and dipped her head. "Thank you so much, Sheer Mountain. This means so much to us."

"I hope so." Sheer Mountain sighed. "I still have no idea what to do."

"We can teach you." Owlpaw replied eagerly.

"Now if I do this," Sheer Mountain spoke up. "Then I need you to do something for me."

"Anything."

"If I'm going to become a leader then I need you to follow your dreams of becoming a medicine cat." Owlpaw blinked in surprise.

"Don't let my father's death deter you away from what you know you want to do. If my destiny is to lead this Clan then your destiny is to become a medicine cat for yours."

"Alright." Owlpaw nodded. "I'll do that, and we'll make sure that you know everything you need to in order to lead this Clan. We have to tell the others!"

The two of them waited for the rest of the Clan cats to wake up and when they were awake, Sheer Mountain and Owlpaw gathered them. Sheer Mountain noticed Nettle sitting off to the side. *I wonder what she will think. Maybe she'll want to join the Clan. It would be nice to have someone familiar with me.*

"What's going on?" Earthpelt questioned, looking from Owlpaw to Sheer Mountain.

"I've agreed to lead your Clan." Sheer Mountain replied. Excitement spread across their faces, with the exception of Slatepaw, and they all rushed up to her.

"Oh that's wonderful." Berryheart purred. "Now we can finally get to work on building this Clan!" She was praised by the Clan cats

"Wait," Nettle spoke up, clearly confused. "What's going on?"

Sheer Mountain stepped to the side so she could tell Nettle what they were doing. She explained everything from StarClan to the mission that the Clan cats had been given to build a new Clan and that Sheer Mountain was supposed to lead this new Clan.

"Wow." Nettle stared in shock. "That's...a lot." She lowered her head, she almost looked disappointed. "So you'll be leaving for their territory?"

"Yeah." Sheer Mountain replied. "It's going to be weird, living somewhere else."

"Right," Nettle shuffled her paws. "I suppose that means I'll have to find a new place to live huh. I'm used to it at this point, but I was enjoying living around other cats." *She thinks I don't want her to come.*

"Nettle," Sheer Mountain spoke up. "We're going to need as many cats as possible for this Clan, I was hoping that you would join it with me."

"Really?" Nettle perked up. "You really want me to come with you?"

"I do." Sheer Mountain purred, her pelt burning slightly. "I would love to have you in this Clan with me, I need cats I know along with me."

"Then I'll come with you." Nettle purred, her eyes sparkling.

"Speaking of," Sheer Mountain looked over her shoulder at the three kits who were now waking up. *I suppose I should tell them as well.* "I need to tell them as well." She turned away from Nettle and approached her kits, she noticed Owlpaw following her. *Good. She can explain this better for me.* The two of them reached the three kits and sat down.

"Can I talk to you kits about something really quick?" Sheer Mountain questioned.

"Sure." Wren agreed and the others sat next to their sister. They didn't seem to have as much energy as usual. *They're still grieving Tumbleweed.* Sheer Mountain's heart ached at the thought of her father. *Maybe this will cheer them up.*

"So," Sheer Mountain began. "You know the Clans? I'm sure the Clan cats have told you many stories."

"Yeah." Finch piped up eagerly. "They sound really cool."

"Well, they have invited me to lead a brand new Clan." All three of their eyes went wide. "And of course, you three would be joining me as the first members of this new Clan."

"Really?" Sparrow jumped to his paws, his eyes burning with excitement. "We'd be warriors?"

"To start," Owlpaw spoke up. "You three are young, so you would start out as apprentices like me and Leopardpaw. You'll be assigned a mentor by Sheer Mountain and they will train you. When you're

done training you will earn a warrior name like Earthpelt or Seedclaw."

"That's so cool!" Wren looked at Sheer Mountain. "Does that mean we're leaving the mountains?"

"It does." Sheer Mountain replied sadly. "We'll be moving in with the other Clans, and there will be a lot more of us."

"That sounds so fun!" Finch agreed and the three of them began hopping around in joy. "I can't wait! So is my name going to be Finchpaw?"

"Probably." Owlpaw purred. "I suppose that will be up to Sheer Mountain, and we'll have to wait until we actually get a Clan together."

"So the next step is gathering cats?" Sheer Mountain turned to Owlpaw.

"It would seem so." Owlpaw nodded slowly. "We also need to find a medicine cat, which might prove to be difficult." Sheer Mountain could see that Owlpaw was starting to overthink the whole situation.

"Don't worry." Sheer Mountain rested her tail on Owlpaw's shoulders. "We have each other and StarClan to guide is right?" Owlpaw looked up, her eyes shimmering with hope. *This is the path I have chosen.* Sheer Mountain glanced up towards the sky. *Mother, please help me to do this right.*

Chapter 11

"This is a very important day for those three." Hollystorm mewed. "It's their warrior assessment."

"Why is it such a big deal for us then?" Oakpaw questioned, twitching his ears.

"Because it is also an assessment for *you.*" Burnclaw growled, glaring at his apprentice. "You will be judged just as harshly as the three of them so give it your best."

"Where are they anyway?" Rushpaw questioned.

"They'll be here shortly." Mudfall answered. "They're getting prepped by their mentors." A few short moments later, Falconheart, Flashtail and Larkthorn arrived with Bluepaw, Snowpaw and Windpaw trotting eagerly behind them.

"Welcome." Mudfall turned to face the newcomers and gave him a nod.

"Thanks." Falconheart waved his tail in return and the apprentices gathered up. "You will be hunting in teams of two." He began explaining. "We'll pair Blossompaw with Bluepaw, Rushpaw with Windpaw and Oakpaw with Snowpaw. The older apprentices will be taking the lead here. They need to learn how to lead and the rest of you need to learn how to follow orders."

Blossompaw listened intently, Oakpaw didn't seem too interested, but Blossompaw was incredibly excited to get started. She wanted to show off the hunting skills she had been practicing. *Plus Bluepaw is super nice! I have no doubt we'll do a great job together!* "Bluepaw and Blossompaw," Larkthorn spoke up. "The two of you will go hunting near the abandoned badger den. Snowpaw and Oakpaw will hunt near the Rockpile by the MoonClan border and Windpaw and Rushpaw will go near the gathering hollow border."

"We will come get you when your assessment is over." Flashtail added. "And we will be watching you the entire time." Blossompaw couldn't help but think Flashtail would struggle to stay hidden with his white pelt. "Now head out and do your best."

The apprentices went their separate ways and Blossompaw eagerly followed towards the AshClan border. "Keep your sense peeled for any prey." Bluepaw told her and Blossompaw raised her muzzle, breathing in the scent of the forest. It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining overhead and the air was nice and cool. She knew that leaf-bare was on the way, but she would enjoy the weather while she could.

Blossompaw did her best to pick through the scents of the forest until she picked up the scent of mouse. "Mouse." She announced to Bluepaw and the blue-gray she-cat watched as she sniffed out the prey. Blossompaw lowered her body and crept through the forest, tracking her prey. Bluepaw followed close behind and Blossompaw finally spotted the creature, sitting on a root that twisted out of the ground.

We'll have to work together to catch this one. She turned to Bluepaw, keeping her voice low. "If one of us gets behind the mouse we can chase--" Blossompaw cut herself off, immediately remembering that Bluepaw was supposed to be taking charge of the hunt. "Sorry." Her ears dropped and she lowered her head.

Bluepaw let out a small laugh. "It's okay, but you're right." She mewed. "Why don't you go behind the mouse and chase it into me." Blossompaw nodded and slowly skirted around the tree, making sure to remain silent. *I won't screw this up for Blossompaw.* She vowed and reached the tree with the mouse on it. She crouched behind the tree and met Bluepaw's gaze as she crouched in the distance.

Blossompaw cleared her mind and charged forward, the mouse was quickly alarmed to her presence than broke into a swift sprint towards Bluepaw. The apprentice leapt out of the trees and caught the mouse with a quick, clean bite to the neck. "Good job." Bluepaw praised.

"You too." Bluepaw praised her. "Let's keep hunting." The two she-cats ventured deeper into the trees. Blossompaw kept behind Bluepaw, making sure that *she* was taking charge. They neared the badger den and Blossompaw caught the scent of squirrel, and she could tell by Bluepaw's body language that she sense it as well. Bluepaw waved Blossompaw to follow with her tail and Blossompaw lowered her body to the ground, following Bluepaw's lead.

Bluepaw led her down towards the badger den and Blossompaw spotted the ginger fur of the squirrel through the trees. Blossompaw watched Bluepaw creep up on the squirrel, it didn't appear that Bluepaw needed her help, so Blossompaw just stayed back and watched.

Bluepaw slowly moved forward, her pawsteps completely silent. After a few short moments, the blue-gray she-cat shot forward towards the squirrel. It became aware of the danger and started to climb up the tree, but Bluepaw was faster.

Blossompaw was watching in awe as Bluepaw ran up the side of the tree for a brief moment, hooking her claws into the squirrel and dragging it back down to the ground before killing it. "Wow!" Blossompaw exclaimed, jumping out of the trees. "That was so cool!"

"Thanks." Bluepaw purred, setting her squirrel down. "That's the first time that's worked. Falconheart taught it to me."

"I'd love to try it some time, that looked so cool." Blossompaw gushed again. "You're going to pass this assessment for sure."

"I sure hope so." Bluepaw waved her tail. "Now let's continue." Blossompaw and Bluepaw continued in their assessment, catching two more squirrels and two more mice before Falconheart and Mudfall stepped into view.

"It's time to return." Mudfall mewed, twitching his tail. "Let's go meet up with the others." Neither of them gave anything away to if either of them had passed. Bluepaw and Blossompaw met up with their siblings and their mentors and the six of them faced their

mentors.

"I want to start off by saying you all did incredibly well." Flashtail began. "We started discussing your performance before we all pulled you back."

"Windpaw," Larkthorn began. "You hunted very well and led Rushpaw wisely. The two of you worked well together, I'm happy to say you passed. I know Sedgefern will be proud as well." Windpaw and Rushpaw shared a look of excitement and both purred loudly.

"Snowpaw," Flashtail looked at his apprentice. "You showed great leadership and skill while hunting, and though Oakpaw was a bit challenging, you led very well." Oakpaw licked his chest bashfully and Blossompaw couldn't help but let out a small laugh.

"And finally, Bluepaw." Falconheart spoke. "You hunted very well, including a near miss on a squirrel that you recovered impressively from. You led Blossompaw well, even though you struggled to take charge at first. The two you are both very skilled hunters."

"With that I think it's safe to say that you all passed." Mudfall mewed. "Including the younger apprentices as well."

Blossompaw held her head high, casting an eager glance at Bluepaw. *We did it!* She purred loudly. *Now they'll become warriors.* As they began the trek back to camp, Blossompaw couldn't help but wish that Owlpaw was here. *I wonder if she's still training while she's out there.* Blossompaw wondered. *I hope she's learning a lot.* The group of SunClan warriors reached their camp and the mentors went to Dawnstar who was sharing tongues with Lionclaw outside her den.

It didn't take long for Dawnstar to pad over to the SunStone and take her place at the top, while Cinderflame joined her sitting at the base.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the SunStone for a Clan meeting." Dawnstar's voice rang out over the stone hollow and the Clan began to gather. The three sisters sat eagerly at the base of the SunStone while Cherryleaf and Cloudspots

watched with love burning in their eyes.

Once the Clan was gathered, Dawnstar began speaking. "I've gathered our Clan today because three of our apprentices have passed their assessments and it is time for them to enter the rank of warriors." Dawnstar jumped down to face the apprentices.

"I call upon my warrior ancestors to look down upon these apprentices for they have trained long and hard to understand the ways of your noble code and I commend them to you as warriors in their turn." She looked over each of the she-cats. "Bluepaw, Windpaw and Snowpaw. Do you promise to uphold the warrior code and defend the Clan even at the cost of your lives?"

"I do." Each of the she-cats responded in turn, their voices brimming with pride and confidence.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names." Blossompaw felt proud of her Clanmates, but she also found herself dreaming of her own warrior ceremony. "Bluepaw, from this day forward you will be known as Bluestream. SunClan honors your compassion and loyalty." The newly named Bluestream stepped forward and licked Dawnstar's shoulder as the leader rested her muzzle on Bluestream's head.

"Windpaw, from this day forward you will be known as Windsong. SunClan honors your agility and intelligence." They repeated the ritual and Dawnstar moved on. "Snowpaw, from this day forward you will be known as Snowfeather. SunClan honors your patience and strong heart. I am proud to welcome you all as full warriors of SunClan!"

"Bluestream! Windsong! Snowfeather!" The cats fo SunClan cheered their newest warriors and Blossompaw watched happily. She looked at both of her brothers who were also cheering on the warriors. *It will be our turn someday.* She thought, glancing up towards the sky. *But we have to wait for Owlpaw first.*

Chapter 12

Owlpaw could see the stars, they shimmered over head, brighter than ever. She felt an overwhelming sense of calm. She focused in on the world and realized she was on the stone overlook. *I don't think I fell asleep up here.* Owlpaw blinked, then caught the calming scent of Mosscloud. She looked to her side and saw the starry-eyed medicine cat sitting next to her.

"Such a beautiful night." Mosscloud breathed out before looking at Owlpaw. "I'm going to miss this place."

"Me too." Owlpaw looked up at the stars. *We'll be going home soon.* She felt incredibly relaxed, more than she had in a long time.

"I'm proud of you. You managed to convince Sheer Mountain." Mosscloud replied.

"I don't think I had much to do with it." Owlpaw admitted, lowering her head.

"Sheer Mountain puts her trust in you, she admires you and I know you admire her as well." Mosscloud rested her tail across her paws. "It's tragic what happened to Tumbleweed, I hate that it came to that to get Sheer Mountain to open her mind. But loss is often what we need to get stronger."

Owlpaw flattened her ears. "I still wish I could've saved him. It hurts, I've barely been able to sleep. Even now that I know Sheer Mountain is going to lead this Clan."

"Tumbleweed had no regrets coming into the stars."

"He's in StarClan?"

"Not quite." Mosscloud purred. "StarClan does not roam these skies, Owlpaw. I am not even technically in StarClan. Though when you return to the mountains, I am hoping that I will be able to follow

you, and I will bring Star and Tumbleweed with me so they can continue to watch over their daughter."

"Is Tumbleweed...doing okay? Being in the stars and all?"

"He was shocked when I showed up, he started going off about regret and wishing he had believed Star. Then I brought him to her and it was like he had seen her for the first time. I got to watch them fall in love all over again, it was incredibly sweet. They haven't left each other's side since getting reunited. That kind of love is special, Owlpaw."

"When I become a medicine cat, I don't get that kind of love."

"Not in the same way, no." Mosscloud looked her in the eyes. "But you do get a powerful love. A love for your Clanmates, for your Clan and for the stars." She tilted her head back up. "I never found myself wanting a mate like some medicine cats. I don't blame them for feeling that way, but I loved the responsibility to my Clan and to my Clanmates. It was a feeling unlike any other. Medicine cats are unique, it is our love that drives us."

Owlpaw felt moved by her words, she had no desire for mates, she had always figured she was just too young but even Blossompaw had talked about her future with a mate and kits. "I've always been destined to be a medicine cat, I know this now." She looked at her paws for a moment before turning her attention back to Mosscloud. "Speaking of medicine cats, the new Clan needs one. How will I find a cat who can communicate with StarClan?"

"I will send you a sign when the time is right." Mosscloud replied. "For now, you better get started finding Sheer Mountain some Clanmates. Venture into the twolegplace, tell them of your plan and ask them to gather where the Clan cats can explain in depth the live they will be leading. You'll be surprised at how many of the cats here dream of something more."

"Is it going to be hard?"

"It won't be easy, no." Mosscloud slowly shook her head. "But it's far from impossible, getting Sheer Mountain to accept her role as

leader was the most challenging part, you should find this to be easier."

Owlpaw took a deep breath. "We need to get started then. Leaf-bare will be here before we know it."

"I'll be here to help." Mosscloud rested her muzzle on Owlpaw's forehead. "Keep your eyes open. I will send a sign soon."

Owlpaw's eyes fluttered open and she was back in her nest. She rose to her paws and let out a yawn. Leafdawn, Slatepaw and Seedclaw were absent from their nests. Berryheart was keeping watch outside and Earthpelt and Fennelpaw were still sleeping. Nettle was off in her own nest towards the back of the den.

Owlpaw quickly padded over to the slumbering rogue and gave her wound a sniff. It was healing perfectly, she still had a bit of a limp but she was walking and hunting as usual. *Her resilience is impressive.* Owlpaw noted.

Now awake, Owlpaw stepped out into the open cavern. Outside, the kits were playing and Sheer Mountain was near them, her eyes gazing off into the pale gray sky. Owlpaw padded over to her. *I wonder what she's thinking about.* Owlpaw wondered.

"Good morning, Owlpaw." Seedclaw called to her, padding into the cavern with Slatepaw and Leafdawn behind him, setting some fresh-kill on the pile.

"Good morning." Owlpaw dipped her head. "Hunt well?"

"Yes." Seedclaw purred. "Is Fennelpaw still sleeping?" Owlpaw nodded and Seedclaw stepped into the den. A few moments later he returned with Fennelpaw behind and Earthpelt wasn't that far after.

"I'd like to talk to you all about something." Owlpaw rose her voice and the Clan cats gathered. She noticed she had caught Sheer Mountain's attention and the loner approached the group as well.

"Spit it out." Slatepaw urged, sounding incredibly impatient.

"I spoke with Mosscloud again last night," Owlpaw began, the

others listening intently. "And we need to start searching the twolegplace for potential Clan members."

"What do we do?" Fennelpaw asked.

"We explain to them what we're doing, and Mosscloud suggested having them all meet here so we can explain in depth what being a Clan cat is."

"And the medicine cat?" Leafdawn checked.

"Mosscloud said she would send me a sign and I need to keep my eyes peeled."

"It's great we have our own personal StarClan communicator with us." Slatepaw grumbled only for Leafdawn to flick her tail over his ears.

"We should get started right away then." Seedclaw spoke up. "I don't think we need all of us to go but we should definitely have Owlpaw with us, and Sheer Mountain as well."

"You should come too." Owlpaw suggested. "Having a cat who used to be a kittypet could help, and Berryheart too. That way we have a rouge, a loner and a kittypet. It could help sway them."

"I'd like to go too." Earthpelt spoke up.

"Then I think this is a fine party to go with." Seedclaw looked at the others. "This will probably take several trips so Fennelpaw and Leopardpaw can join us on a later trip." His eyes rested on Slatepaw. "You can stay here, Slatepaw."

"Yeah, whatever." Slatepaw flattened his ears. "Like I'd like to stomp around the twolegplace talking to random cats."

"Then let's get going." Berryheart mewed. "We need to cover as much ground as possible."

The party moved out of the cavern and started heading towards the twolegplace. "Sheer Mountain do you know of any cats who would be willing to join us?" Earthpelt questioned.

"No, sorry." Sheer Mountain replied. "I don't know many cats in the twolegplace, the only one I ever really knew was Raptor. I know there's a lot of cats around though. If we can meet a friendly one they can take us around to some more."

The group of cats stayed on the outside of the twolegplace first, no cat would say it but Owlpaw knew that they would prefer rouges and loners over kittypets. *They would take less time to train.* Owlpaw noted.

As they neared a pale yellow twolegnest, Sheer Mountain spoke up. "I think there's two friendly kittypets who live here." They reached the twolegnest and Owlpaw spotted a black and white mass of fur sleeping in one of the openings. A head lifted up and Owlpaw realized that it was actually two cats.

One of the lifted heads was a slender black and white tom with a splotchy black nose. "I don't think I've ever seen a group of cats that big." The other cat raised their head and it was another tom, this one with a pale pink nose and long fur.

"What are you all doing?" The other one questioned in a smooth voice. The cats all looked at Owlpaw. *Guess it's my job to explain all of this.*

"My name is Owlpaw. What's yours?"

"I'm Jake." The long haired tom replied. "And this is my brother, Elwood."

"Well, we're in search of cats to join a Clan. A Clan is a group of cats who live and hunt together, we're hoping to gather some cats willing to travel with us to create a new Clan."

"You all hunt and live outside?" Elwood asked skeptically. "In the woods? That doesn't sound very fun."

"It doesn't seem like it," Seedclaw spoke up. "I used to be a kittypet myself, and moving to the woods was the best choice I ever made."

"I'm sure it's great." Jake twitched his ears. "But it's not for me."

"Me neither," Elwood shook his head. "What would I do without my wet food? Or my housefolk to cuddle with. She takes very good care of us, and I have no intention of leaving her side."

"I understand." Seedclaw dipped his head. "If either of you change your mind, there's a stone cavern near the river. We're holding a meeting there in three sunrises."

"Thanks but no thanks." Jake lowered his head.

"If you want some cats who might be interested," Elwood mewed. "There's some loner sisters that live outside the twolegplace in a burrow. They might be interested. I think one is named Briar."

"Thank you." Sheer Mountain dipped her head and they continued.

"I don't understand how they can live like that." Earthpelt shuddered.

"Sometimes kittypets form strong bonds with their twolegs." Seedclaw explained. "When I was a kit, my twoleg and I were very close. Then I grew up and so did he and he stopped playing with me. That's when I started venturing out into the woods and met Mossleaf." *Mossleaf is Seedclaw's former mate.* Owlpaw had been told. *She died before the Clans left their old territory.*

"Hopefully these loners will be interested." Owlpaw mewed. "The first cats we met weren't even interested."

"It's hard to get kittypets to change their ways." Sheer Mountain pointed out. "We'll have more luck with loners and rogues."

They came to the end of the twolegplace and Owlpaw spotted a burrow in the distance as well as three cats sunning themselves outside. As the Clan cats grew closer the cats noticed and all three of them got to their feet and faced the cats. Two of the she-cats were nearly identical with golden-brown fur with amber eyes and one of them being smaller and dark gray.

"Who are you." One of the golden-brown she-cats demanded.

"My name is Owlpaw." She bowed her head. "We come in peace."

They still remained on guard. "What do you want?"

"We just want to talk." Owlpaw spoke gently.

"Alright then," The other mewed, "Talk." Owlpaw quickly repeated what she had told the kittypets then waited for a response.

"So you live in a big group?" One of the she-cats mewed. "Where do you all sleep?"

"We build dens." Earthpelt explained. "Each of the different type of Clan cat are separated."

"What do you mean different types?"

"Most cats are called warriors such as myself and Seedclaw here. Younger cats in training are called apprentices like Owlpaw. They all have their own dens."

"And you hunt together?" The dark gray she-cat tilted her head.

Owlpaw nodded. "We all work together to support each other. If you're sick or injured, then your medicine cat will heal you while your Clanmates hunt for you."

"That actually sounds really cool."

"If you're interested," Berryheart mewed. "In three days we will be having a meeting in a large cavern near the river. Everything will be explained more in depth."

"We'll have to stop by. By the name, my name is Briar." One of the golden she-cats mewed. "And these are my sisters Hazel and River." Hazel was the other golden-brown she-cat and River was the dark gray she-cat.

"We look forward to seeing you there." Seedclaw mewed and they continued.

"That went much better." Owlpaw breathed out a sigh of relief. "But we still have a long way to go."

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Owlpaw and the others finally returned to the cavern as the sun started setting. Owlpaw felt incredibly exhausted from walking around and her lungs were burning slightly. *We walked around so much.* She panted as she fell down into her nest. They had talked to several other cats including a loner named Turnip who agreed to meet with them. Several rouges named Yew, Ant, Poppy and Flick who all agreed to meet and a kittypet named Melon who agreed to meet.

They had also met several other rouges who would rather rip their ears off than speak to them. They hadn't got a lot of cats, but there was still time and Owlpaw was impressed with what they had done in one day. *Tomorrow we will do more.* Owlpaw slowly closed her eyes, feeling satisfied. *We're one step closer to this new Clan.*

Chapter 13

Sheer Mountain rose from her nest and stretched, feeling energy flow through her body. She was eager to set out and get searching for members for her Clan. With each passing day she was becoming more accustomed to to the thought of leading a Clan. Even if they had only found a few possible members, she was eager to meet them all more in depth.

She stepped out into the cavern where she saw the Clan cats all ready to go. She knew that almost all the Clan cats except for Leafdawn and Slatepaw were going. Sheer Mountain had hardly ever spoken to the fierce AshClan apprentice. He seemed to have no interest in this mission, it made Sheer Mountain wonder why he had been chosen for this journey.

"Sheer Mountain!" Sheer Mountain heard Owlpaw call her name. The young apprentice's eyes were full of energy. Sheer Mountain was relieved to see that Owlpaw had so much energy, she had been so down trodden lately. *Owlpaw is the complete opposite of Slatepaw, this mission was her destiny.*

Sheer Mountain quickly padded over to the group of Clan cats. "Good morning." Sheer Mountain dipped her head.

"I suggest you get something to eat." Seedclaw mewed. "We'll be leaving as soon as possible."

"Good idea." Sheer Mountain picked herself up a sparrow and quickly ate it before grouping up with the Clan cats. Sheer Mountain looked towards Leafdawn. "You're sure you're alright with keeping an eye on the kits?"

"Of course." Leafdawn purred. "They can't be any worse than Slatepaw." Slatepaw grumbled to himself and Sheer Mountain laughed at his expense. Knowing her kits were safe in the paws of Leafdawn, she and the others headed out. They started towards the twolegplace and Sheer Mountain felt like today would be a good

day.

I'm supposed to lead this Clan. Sheer Mountain reminded herself. *So there has to be cats willing to join it, right?* They reached the twolegplace and at Seedclaw's direction, they decided to check the edges of the twolegplace for loners first. They passed the home of Briar and her sisters and Sheer Mountain caught the scent of another cat.

"There's a cat nearby." She alerted the others. They started looking and Sheer Mountain noticed Owlpaw following the scent close. *It's a shame she doesn't like hunting. She's such a good tracker.*

"Over there." Owlpaw noted, Sheer Mountain saw a small den tucked in a nearby cluster of trees. The group approached cautiously and Sheer Mountain spotted a mound of brown fur behind the nest.

"Excuse me." Seedclaw raised his voice, getting the cat's attention. The cat poked his head around his den and looked at the large group of cats in confusion.

"If you're looking for prey I don't have any to spare." The tom replied, though he didn't seem scared, mostly annoyed.

"We're not looking for prey." Owlpaw stepped forward. "We just want to talk to you for a moment."

He narrowed his eyes slightly but relaxed. "Alright." He sat down.

"What's your name?"

"Trout." He replied.

"My name is Owlpaw, and these are my friends."

"That's uh, a *strange* name. No offense, sweetie."

"None taken." Owlpaw purred. "You see, we've travelled from quite a ways away. We all come from Clans. Clans are groups of cats who work together to hunt and look after each other. We're creating a brand new Clan and we need cats to join."

"How exactly do you work together?" He questioned, but Sheer Mountain couldn't help but notice he looked interested.

"We share dens, we hunt in patrols and provide for our Clanmates. When we have queens nursing kits then we hunt for then, or we hunt for our elders or the sick and the injured. We live in a territory that we protect. Warriors train to hunt and fight to keep their fellow Clanmates safe."

"What about leafbare?"

"We huddle together and work together to stock up on prey, and our medicine cats can cure greencough."

"Hmmm..." The tom thought for a moment. "I've never been one to spend my time with other cats but leafbare is getting harder each season. It might be nice to have some others around."

"If you're interested," Sheer Mountain spoke up. "We're having a small gathering at my home in the mountains where the Clan cats will explain everything in more detail. It will be then that you can decide if you wish to join us or not."

"I'll think about it." Trout yawned.

"That's all we ask." Earthpelt dipped her head. "Do you know of any other cats who may be interested."

"Like I said," Trout continued. "I don't often find myself in the company of others. I do know of a peppy little kittypet who can't seem to stay in her own garden. I've seen her wander this way quite a bit. Maybe she'd be interested. She lives in the white twolegnest over there."

Sheer Mountain still wasn't sure if they would convince any kittypets, but maybe if she was finding it hard to stay home...*It's worth a shot.* "Thank you, Trout." Sheer Mountain dipped her head. "I hope to see you in a few days."

The group turned away and started towards the twolegnest. "That went well." Leopardpaw purred with delight. "He seems like a nice cat."

"He does." Fennelpaw agreed. "Hopefully he agrees to join."

"This kittypet seems like a good idea as well." Seedclaw noted. "Usually kittypets who are set in their ways don't wander far."

They reached the twolegnest and Sheer Mountain picked up the scent of a cat. She spotted a blur of mottled dark brown fur and saw a small she-cat chasing after a butterfly. She was tortoiseshell with bright green eyes that brimmed with excitement. She gave a big leap, but the insect fluttered away. She didn't seem discouraged though. She looked a little older than Sheer Mountain's kits, maybe about a moon or so younger than Leopardpaw. "Hello there." Sheer Mountain called to the young she-cat.

She turned her head and her eyes went wide. The little kittypet raced over to them. "Hi there!" She greeted with glee. "My name is Mossie, I've never seen such a big group of cats! What are you doing here?"

"We're on a bit of a mission." Owlpaw spoke up. "My name is Owlpaw and I come from a Clan." Owlpaw relayed the information of being in a Clan and Mossie's green eyes filled with pure excitement and wonder.

"That sounds so cool!" Mossie jumped around. "I would *love* to learn how to properly hunt. One time I caught a grasshopper, but that's it. You lot know how to hunt birds?"

"We hunt all kinds of prey." Berryheart purred.

"If you're interested in joining a new Clan," Sheer Mountain mewed. "Come to the mountains by the river in two days where we will explain more in depth."

"Okay!" Mossie exclaimed. "I'll be there for sure!"

"Thank you." Owlpaw dipped her head. "We'll be happy to see you." Mossie ran off back into her garden and Sheer Mountain felt hope burning inside of her.

"She seems to be a guarantee." Sheer Mountain pointed out as they padded away.

"She'll definitely start as an apprentice." Earthpelt pointed out. "But she has the energy and the drive to be a great warrior. I can see it."

"Let's keep looking." Seedclaw mewed. "We have many more cats to meet." They neared another twolegplace and Sheer Mountain spotted a plump tortoiseshell she-cat sunning herself outside.

"Hello there." Owlpaw called to her. She opened her eyes lazily and let out a yawn. "May we talk to you for a moment."

"I suppose." The she-cat didn't seem to be that interested.

"My name is Owlpaw, what's your name?"

"Penny."

Owlpaw delivered her speech once more and Penny didn't seem to be interested at all. "What do you think?"

"I think it sounds like a waste of time." Penny twitched her ears. "Why would I want to sleep in the dirt in the cold when I could be inside with my blanket and endless food? No thanks."

"Well," Owlpaw dipped her head. "Thank you for listening." They moved away from the she-cat and Owlpaw sighed. "I guess we can't convince everyone."

"Don't lose hope." Earthpelt assured her apprentice. "We still have time and many more cats to talk to." As they continued through the twolegplace they met another kittypet by the name of Lucky who turned them down as well, though more politely than Penny.

As they walked down a stone path, Sheer Mountain's pelt suddenly stood on end and she stopped in her tracks. She lifted her head and caught the very faint scent of another cat. "What's wrong, Sheer Mountain?" Berryheart questioned.

"We're being followed." She looked around, trying to see if any cats were around.

"What are you talking about?" Seedclaw asked, looking around in concern.

"Show yourself." Sheer Mountain raised her voice. Sure enough, a lanky jet black tom stepped out from behind two large twoleg objects. "Why are you following us?" She demanded. He blinked his bright yellow eyes.

"I've been following you for quite a while." He sat down and licked his paw. "Since you talked to Mossie anyway."

How did we not notice him? Sheer Mountain wondered.

"Why, though?" Earthpelt questioned.

"I saw you lot walking around yesterday as well. So I started following you today and listening to your little speech. You're looking for cats to join this Clan thing?"

"We are." Owlpaw stepped forward. "Are you interested."

"I am." He nodded. "I could use a change of pace in my life. All I do is trek around this twolegplace."

"Then feel free to join us in the meeting." Owlpaw offered. "What's your name?"

"Spider." He replied and rose to his paws. "I'll see you in a couple days." He turned to leave but stopped himself. "By the way," He mewed. "Would you allow it if I brought another cat with me? My friend has been itching to get away from the twolegplace as well."

"The more the merrier." Seedclaw dipped his head. "We'll see you then."

"Thanks." Spider turned and vanished into the twolegplace.

"I don't know how we didn't sense him sooner." Berryheart mewed.

"I don't know." Earthpelt mewed. "But that is a good skill for a Clan cat to have. I bet he's a good hunter."

"Hopefully he agrees to join us." Sheer Mountain noted. "But let's keeping going."

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Sheer Mountain dragged her paws into the cavern, feeling incredibly exhausted. She sat down and sighed that she was finally back home. The rest of the Clan cats were clearly exhausted as well. They had searched the entire twolegplace and managed to meet several more cats who agreed to meet including some kittypets named Kip, Polly and Rick. Rick didn't seem to be interested but agreed to meet regardless so Sheer Mountain hoped to change his mind.

On their way home they had met Dew, a loner agreed to meet up as well. Sheer Mountain felt so incredibly hopeful about the future. *I hope all of these cats agree to join my Clan.* It felt a little weird, calling it *her* Clan, but she was starting to feel genuinely excited. *I can't wait to see what the future holds.*

Chapter 14

Blossompaw pressed her body against the ground and Oakpaw reared up on her. She shot forward as quick as she could manage, swiping at Oakpaw's legs. She hit them hard enough and knocked his hind legs out from underneath him. Oakpaw hit the ground and let out a huff of air. Blossompaw jumped back to her forelegs, she placed her paw at the base of Oakpaw's tail and tried to place her paw on his neck, but Oakpaw was stronger.

Using his weight, he pulled his tail out from underneath Blossompaw, causing her to lose balance. Oakpaw twisted on his paws and delivered a sharp bow to Blossompaw's ribs, sending her falling to the ground. She hissed at the pain and Oakpaw did to her, what she was trying to do to him. He placed one paw at the base of her tail and one paw gently at her throat. Blossompaw struggled to break away from his grasp.

"That's enough." Mudfall spoke up, rising to his paws. Blossompaw's pelt burned with humiliation. *Why can't I get this.*

"Let me try again." Blossompaw pleaded. "I can get it this time."

"There's no need for that, Blossompaw." Mudfall shook his head slowly. "You've shown great improvement since we started today. We'll practice more later, last thing we need is one of you getting actually hurt." Blossompaw flattened her ears. *Why can't I get this?* They had been training for quite a long time on a battle move and while Oakpaw learned it almost instantly, Blossompaw had yet to execute it correctly.

"Let's head back to camp." Burnclaw suggested. "Oakpaw and I are scheduled for the evening patrol." Blossompaw stayed silent as the others agreed and bitterly followed them back to camp. She drug her paws through the leaves and kept her head low. *Seems like this is becoming a common thing.* She thought sadly. She just couldn't understand why she struggled so much with fighting.

I'm a good hunter, so why can't I be good at fighting too? She glanced at her brother. *Oakpaw is good at hunting* and *fighting. Rushpaw isn't* as *good as fighting at Oakpaw, but he's still learning and improving all the time.* Blossompaw felt like she was falling behind her siblings. When Owlpaw had been in camp she struggled with both hunting and fighting, but she was also out exploring the world and learning so much. *She's going to come back so much stronger and smarter. But at least she would understand what I'm feeling.*

The group of cats entered the camp and Burnclaw and Oakpaw broke away to join a patrol with Windsong, Fawnheart, Briarrose and Maplepaw. "Why don't you get some prey?" Mudfall suggested.

"Okay." Blossompaw grumbled, but she didn't really feel like eating.

"Don't feel bad that you're struggling." Mudfall told her as Blossompaw walked away. "Just because you're struggling doesn't mean that you're failing."

"It feels like it." Blossompaw muttered. "It only takes Oakpaw and Rushpaw one day to master a battle move. It takes me like five."

"If you compare yourself to your brothers then you're going to set yourself up for failure everytime." Mudfall brushed his tail against Blossompaw's pelt. "You're are not your brothers, you are Blossompaw. Believe me."

"Did you do the same with Earthpelt?"

Mudfall shook his head. "Not with Earthpelt, but with Falconheart."

"Falconheart?" Blossompaw tilted her head. "He's not your brother."

"No but he's my cousin, and he was so skilled. Even as a kit he was brave, reckless, but brave. I wanted to be as strong and as brave as him, but it just never happened. Eventually, with his help, I learned to not be ashamed of my own skills. I became my own cat and didn't worry about what I couldn't do and started focused on what I *could* do."

Blossompaw wanted to feel reassured by Mudfall's words but she just couldn't. *I am worried about what I can't do, because I can't learn*

how to fight properly. Despite her true feelings, Blossompaw lifted her head. "Thanks, Mudfall." She faked feeling better, hoping that he would fall for it.

"Of course." Mudfall dipped his head. "If you'd like, tomorrow we can wake up early and get some extra battle training in. It'll be just you as me and we can practice as much as you'd like." Blossompaw genuinely felt a little better at his suggestion.

"I'd like that." Blossompaw purred.

Movement caught Blossompaw's eye and she saw Heatherflight sprinting from the nursery towards the medicine cat den. Mudfall suddenly rose to his paws, his entire body tense. Blossompaw rose to her paws as well. *What's happening.* A few moments later, Honeyfrost and Pebblestep quickly padded out of the medicine cat den with herbs.

Heatherflight stopped and looked over at Mudfall. "Mudfall, Dovepool is giving birth!" Mudfall's eyes filled with fear and he seemed to be frozen. Heatherflight ran off back to the nursery.

"Are you okay, Mudfall?" Blossompaw asked quietly. Her mentor didn't respond, he stood completely still for several moments. In the blink of an eye, Mudfall suddenly tore into a sprint out of camp. Blossompaw stared after her mentor in shock before giving into a sprint after him.

Why is he running away? Blossompaw thought as she gave chase. *Isn't he excited.* As she broke into the forest she spotted Mudfall sitting alone in a cluster of trees. Blossompaw skidded to a stop and approached her mentor from behind. "What are you doing?" Blossompaw questioned. "Aren't you excited? You're going to be a father."

"I don't know if I can do this," Mudfall began, his voice trembling. "I don't know if I'm ready to be a father. What if I'm a bad father?"

"You won't be." Blossompaw assured him. "All a good father has to do is protect and spend time with his kits. Encourage them and love them. You love Dovepool right?"

Mudfall glanced over his shoulder. "More than anything."

"Then you'll love your kits just as much." Blossompaw explained. "You've known about these kits for two moons. I was born unexpectedly and my father still loves me." Blossompaw joked and approached her mentor. "I can guarantee that the moment you look at your kits, you'll know that you're ready to be a father. I promise."

Mudfall looked at Blossompaw, a small sparkle of hope in his green eyes. "You sure?"

"Positive." Blossompaw purred.

Mudfall took a deep breath and his body seemed to relax. "You know, I don't think the apprentice is supposed to encourage the mentor." He looked at paws. "I'm sorry, Blossompaw. I shouldn't have let you see me like that."

"It's alright." Blossompaw purred. "Now let's get back to camp so you can meet your kits." The two of of them took a long walk home, she could tell that Mudfall was still nervous, but she knew that once he saw his kits, he would truly become a father.

Mudfall and Blossompaw finally reached camp and Mudfall stared at the nursery for a long moment before approaching. Blossompaw followed close behind, she wanted to see the new kits as well. She half-expected Dovepool to still be kitting but inside the nursery was silent.

Dovepool was in a nest, looking lovingly at three kits nursing at her belly. "There you are." Her eyes flashed with fear. "I was worried about you."

"Sorry." Mudfall padded slowly into the nursery. "I just had to prepare myself." He looked down at his three cats and his eyes went wide, filling with love. *There it is.* Blossompaw thought fondly." He gave the kits a gentle sniff. "These are...mine?"

Dovepool gigged. "Yes, they're our kits. Aren't they beautiful." The three kits were so tiny, one was pale brown with some lighter flecks. A brown kit and a pale gray kit.

"That one looks like my mother." Mudfall looked at the pale brown kit.

"I thought so too." Dovepool nuzzled the kits head. "I was actually thinking we could name her Doekit."

"That's perfect." Mudfall purred. "This one is such a pretty shade of brown." He nuzzled the tom in the middle. "We could name him Acornkit."

"Since you named Oatkit," Sedgefern raised her voice. "I want to name the last one. It's only fair."

Dovepool laughed. "Alright, Sedgefern. What do you got?"

"I was thinking about Mintkit." Sedgefern suggested.

"I love it." Dovepool looked over her three kits loving. "Doekit, Acornkit and Mintkit." Blossompaw could see the pure love in Dovepool and Mudfall's eyes. *I'll leave them be.* Blossompaw turned out of the nursery and into the camp. She felt good about herself, knowing that she had been able to help Mudfall. *He's going to be a great father.* Blossompaw thought. She thought about her earlier training failure. *I'll just have to keep trying.* She told herself. *I won't give up until I get it.*

Chapter 15

Owlpaw rose from her nest, she stepped out into the chilly early morning air and breathed in the scent of the mountains. She was eagerly waiting for tomorrow, as it was the meeting to try and recruit cats for the new Clan. She was eager to see how many cats would join them. However, despite her excitement one worry still clung to her mind. *The Clan needs a medicine cat.* Owlpaw had been desperately looking for any signs that Mosscloud might have sent but she hadn't seen anything, she was starting to worry that she had missed it.

Owlpaw padded out into the open cavern, some cats were already awake and eating their morning prey. Owlpaw approached Earthpelt who was sitting with Leafdawn and Berryheart. "Good morning." Owlpaw dipped her head.

"Morning, Owlpaw." Earthpelt purred.

"Where's everyone else?" Owlpaw questioned, looking around.

"Seedclaw took the other apprentices out hunting." Leafdawn explained. "It gives me a bit of a break from Slatepaw." She chuckled. "I know he hates hunting with others, but him dealing with Seedclaw could do some good."

"I've been curious about something, Leafdawn." Berryheart spoke up, getting the she-cats attention. "Why did Riverstar chose Slatepaw for this journey? I understand why she chose you, but Slatepaw is so arrogant and disrespectful."

"That's exactly why Riverstar chose him. She was hoping that this journey would instill some discipline in him. It may not seem like it, but I think it has made him better. From the moment Slatepaw became my apprentice I knew he would be a pawful. He has a lot of skills, and he knows it. He just needs to know that it doesn't make him better than any other cat."

"I honestly don't see how you can handle him." Earthpelt sighed. "Owlpaw's brother, Oakpaw is also rather arrogant but not nearly as bad as Slatepaw." Owlpaw thought about her brother, Oakpaw was confident and a little arrogant but he wasn't downright disrespectful and rude to those around him." *I miss him.* Owlpaw thought sadly, she wondered how her siblings were doing. *I hope their training is going well. Do they miss me? Are they worried about me?*

"It takes a lot of patience." Leafdawn chuckled. "And a little bit of losing my temper and putting him in his place." She twitched her tail. "Though what Slatepaw fails to realize that, if this journey doesn't improve his attitude, he won't become a warrior until he does. If it takes him watching his sisters become warriors without him."

Owlpaw thought that might be a little harsh, but it would probably work for Slatepaw. *If I become a medicine cat,* Owlpaw noted. *Then I won't become a warrior with my siblings.* She glanced at her paws for a moment. *But that's okay. I'll support them and they will support me.*

A few moments later, Seedclaw returned with Fennelpaw, Slatepaw and Leopardpaw behind him. Each of them had jawfuls of prey. They set it down on the rather large fresh-kill pile. "Good hunting." Leafdawn praised.

"Thank you." Seedclaw dipped his head. "Leopardpaw came up with the idea of providing prey to the cats who come to our meeting tomorrow. We'll obviously keep some for ourself but they might think better on full bellies."

"That's a great idea, Leopardpaw." Berryheart purred, praising her apprentice.

"Or it's going to show every rouge that we have plenty of prey to spare and they can attack us again." Slatepaw grumbled, sitting down next to Leafdawn.

"What's it like living with that constant rain cloud over your head, Slatepaw?" Leopardpaw questioned. "It won't kill you to actually be a little happy. For example, the quicker we get this done the quicker all of us can get away from you."

Owlpaw couldn't help but let out a laugh as did the rest of their travelmates at Slatepaw's expense. He slumped his shoulder and grimaced, not responding other than letting out a low growl.

"Cheer up, grumpy." Leafdawn flicked her tail across Slatepaw's ears. "She is right about one thing, our mission is coming to an end soon."

Owlpaw felt a little sad about that fact. *Once this new Clan is built and we've reached the territories, then I will be going back to SunClan and Sheer Mountain will be in her own Clan. I'll miss her.* Owlpaw's heart ached at the thought of leaving her friend behind. *Since I'll be a medicine cat, at least we'll never be enemies.*

The day continued and Berryheart and Seedclaw took their apprentices out battle training. Owlpaw ate some prey by herself, watching Sheer Mountain and Nettle talk while the kits played. *They're becoming good friends.* Owlpaw noted. *That's good. Sheer Mountain will need some extra support in her Clan. Maybe she'll make Nettle her deputy.*

"Have you seen Leafdawn?" The sudden voice of Slatepaw startled Owlpaw slightly, causing her to jump. "Relax." Slatepaw grumbled.

"I think she went out hunting with Earthpelt." Owlpaw replied.

"Figues." Slatepaw groaned. Owlpaw noticed him staring at Sheer Mountain. "Think this Clan thing will actually work?"

"What do you mean?" Owlpaw gazed up at him.

"Rouges, loners and kittypets who know nothing of the warrior code or Clan life. Will they be able to fully function on their own? Yeah there's cats like Berryheart and Seedclaw who started as outsiders but they also had several Clanborn cats around them to show them and teach them. We'll be leaving a full Clan of rouges, loners and kittypets up to their own devices. Are we sure that's such a good idea?"

Owlpaw blinked, she was surprised for a few reasons. Not only was Slatepaw having a civil conversation with Owlpaw, but he was

making a genuine point. "They won't be alone." Owlpaw replied. "They'll have StarClan to guide them. We'll teach them everything we can and really explain to them the sacrifices they will be making. All four of our Clans started from rouges, loners and kittypets with the guidance of StarClan. I believe in Sheer Mountain to lead them well."

"I guess." Slatepaw shrugged. "At least I won't have to share a border with them. Who knows how many "accidental" border slips there will be."

"Yeah it's probably a good thing they won't be sharing a border with AshClan." Owlpaw chuckled. "Both Timberstar and Shadowstar are patient cats, I truly think they will welcome the new Clan. I think Dawnstar will as well, but every cat in the forest knows how stubborn Riverstar is when it comes to change."

"Can you blame her?" Slatepaw's eyes grew distant, in this moment he looked a lot more mature than he had before. "AshClan's suffered a lot. Thornstar's rule nearly destroyed AshClan, not to mention the move and the battle with Echoheart's rouges. I may not have been alive for a lot of it, or too young to remember, but the stories I've heard from my elders have always ended up with the same thing. Riverstar is desperate to prove that her Clan is strong."

"Everyone knows that AshClan is strong." Owlpaw replied. "And the Clans are in a time of peace, especially between SunClan and AshClan. We have a truce."

Slatepaw flicked his ears, and a dark shadow crossed his eyes. "For now, anyway."

"What does that mean?" Owlpaw's fur stood on end.

"A new Clan is coming, this is big change. Peace doesn't last, Owlpaw." Slatepaw met her gaze, his amber eyes burning intensely. "Sooner or later, there's going to be a fight. It doesn't matter which Clans are involved."

Owlpaw shuffled her paws awkwardly. "If you say so."

"Anyway," Slatepaw's intense tone shifted into something Owlpaw was more familiar with. "What are we going to do about a medicine cat? Unless you're volunteering."

Owlpaw ignored his second remark. "Just waiting on Mosscloud's sign." As she spoke, Owlpaw heard something that sent chills down her spine. It sounded like an owl, its shrill cry seemed so out of place in broad daylight, but Slatepaw didn't react at all. Owlpaw's ear perked up and she raised her head. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?" Slatepaw gave her a quizzical look. "Have you got bees in your bain?"

"I heard something." Owlpaw rose to her eyes and looked around. *Am I going crazy?* Small movement caught the corner of her eye and she saw the slow fluttering of wings as a moth landed on a stone near the cavern entrance.

Owlpaw stared at the moth, it was pure white, reflecting the sunlight. Everything in Owlpaw's body screamed at her to follow it. "What are you staring at?" Slatepaw demanded. "A bug?"

Owlpaw could barely hear his words, without her own action driving her, Owlpaw began following the moth. It took off from the rock and fluttered out towards the stone path. Owlpaw quickened her pace and heard pawsteps following behind her.

"Owlpaw where are you going?" Slatepaw called after her. "Have you completely lost it?"

"This is Mosscloud's sign." She called back, now running after the moth. "I can feel it!"

She ran through the open field as the moth led her towards the twolegplace. She had never felt more energy coursing through her veins. She followed the moth into the twolegplace with Slatepaw still following her, and she didn't have time to question why.

She had been in the twolegplace several times in the past few days, but this path was not one they had travelled, even though it was familiar to Owlpaw. *This is the path we took when Sheer Mountain and*

I got catmint for Tumbleweed. The moth landed on a fence, the scent of catmint was heavy on the air.

Owlpaw came to a stop and found herself facing Cocoa, the kittypet that they had met while gathering catmint. "Honestly, Owlpaw." Slatepaw came to a stop, panting slightly. "Any cat would think you had gone mad!" He hissed then looked at Cocoa who seemed to be entrance by the moth.

She broke away from the moth and as Owlpaw blinked, the moth seemingly vanished into thin air. "It's you again." Cocoa spoke, her voice confused. "Did you follow that moth here?"

"I did." Owlpaw stepped forward. "It led me to you."

Cocoa's ears dropped slightly. "I've been seeing it a lot lately," She shuffled her paws. "But it never *came* to me. It would always sit on my fence, and I would follow it for a while but it started to lead me towards the mountains. I could never go that far." She lowered her head. "It's too dangerous."

Mosscloud has been trying to lead her to us! Owlpaw realized. *But since she refused to follow, Mosscloud had to guide me to her.* "It was trying to lead you to the mountains for a reason."

"What do you mean?" Cocoa tilted her head. "It's just some moth."

"Do you remember what I was doing when we first met?" Owlpaw questioned.

Cocoa nodded. "You and that other cat needed my catnip because her father was sick." She curled her tail over her paws. "Since I met you I've been wondering about that, how can plants cure illness? I thought it was just a plant. When I got sick as a kit my housefolk took me to the vet and they made me better."

"I'm from a Clan," Owlpaw explained. "A Clan is a group of cats who all work together to hunt and protect their home. At the heart of all Clans is a medicine cat. They have spent countless season learning the herbs of the forest to use them to treat all kinds of ailments from injuries to illness."

Cocoa's yellow eyes went wide. "Wow, that's incredible." She breathed out. "How do they learn all those things?"

"Through their mentors and guidance from StarClan."

"Star...Clan?" Cocoa seemed more interested than confused now.

"Us Clan cats believe that when a cat dies, they go to StarClan where they watch over us and guide us. They deliver messages and signs to our leaders and medicine cats to warn the cats of grave danger, or to show them something they are missing. We've been under the guidance of a StarClan cat named Mosscloud, I believe she sent the moth to lead us together."

Cocoa dropped her head. "What would some dead star cats want with me?"

"We're in the process of building a fifth Clan. We're gathering members but what we truly need right now is a medicine cat. I believe *you* are supposed to be that medicine cat."

"Me?" Cocoa shook her head. "I'm just some kittypet, though. I could never do something as incredible as what your medicine cats do. I don't even know how I would learn." She stared at her paws.

"I could teach you the little information I know, and then Mosscloud can teach you the rest. You'll be an incredible medicine cat, Cocoa. You've been chosen by the stars."

"But--" Cocoa glanced over her shoulder at the twolegnest she called a home.

"Let me guess," Slatepaw spoke up for the first time." Too afraid to leave your loving twolegs."

"Well..." Cocoa sighed. "Ever since my housefolk had kits of their own, they've been paying less and less attention to me. All they've done is just shoo me away when I try to meet the little thing."

"If you join our Clan," Owlpaw continued. "Then you'll be needed and loved by every single Clan member. I promise."

"I just don't know." Cocoa shuffled her paws. "I don't know if I could really do something like that?"

"Why don't you come with me to the mountains, and we'll try and speak to Mosscloud herself. She can tell you why you were chosen."

Cocoa thought for a long moment. "Alright." She finally spoke up, her voice gaining more strength. "I'll do it."

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Owlpaw, Slatepaw and Cocoa returned to the mountains, with Cocoa being in pure awe of everything around her as she travelled through originally uncharted territory. They padded up the cavern and Owlpaw did her best to explain everything about Clan life. They reached the overlook and Slatepaw didn't stick around, it was beginning to become nightfall and Owlpaw and Cocoa sat on the cold stone.

"So what do I do?" Cocoa questioned.

"You need to open up your heart and your mind to StarClan." Owlpaw explained. "Let Mosscloud come to you."

"Alright." Cocoa cleared her throat and curled up in a tight ball. Owlpaw did the same and closed her eyes. *Please, Mosscloud. Come to us.*

Owlpaw's eyes opened and she lifted her head. Cocoa was also starting to stir, the breeze carried a familiar scent and Owlpaw quickly spotted Mosscloud standing a few taillengths away near the entrance. Cocoa spotted her as well and stared in awe.

"You've done so well, Owlpaw." Mosscloud dipped her head then turned to Cocoa. "It's an honor to meet you." Mosscloud greeted while Cocoa stared in a stunned silence. "I've been watching you for quite some time now, I'm glad you agreed to come with Owlpaw."

Cocoa shook her head and seemed to snap out of her shock. "But why me?"

"I saw a little kittypet who dreamed of something more. Rejected

and forgotten by her twolegs, you strived to see the world and to learn. As I saw the wonder in your eyes as you met Owlpaw for the first time, I knew that you were the one. I tried to guide you here on your own with the moth, but I could see the invisible barriers that you had set up so I sent Owlpaw to you so that she could break you free."

Cocoa's eyes shimmered with amazement. "You really think I can do it? That I can become this medicine cat?"

"I do, Cocoa." Mosscloud purred. "Owlpaw will teach you what she knows, and I will teach you the rest. Once you get to your new home, I will name you as a medicine cat and you will play a crucial role in this Clan's upbringing."

"I-I" Cocoa's voice trembled, she closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "I'll do it."

"Thank you." Owlpaw dipped her head. As they spoke, the vision of Mosscloud faded and Owlpaw and Cocoa woke up on the overlook.

"That was incredible." Cocoa sat up. "I can't believe that just happened."

"As a medicine cat you will communicate with StarClan often. Medicine cats go to the Spirit Garden every half-moon to communicate with StarClan."

"What's it like?"

"I've never been." Owlpaw admitted. "I'm not actually a medicine cat apprentice..." She mewed sheepishly. "But I'm going to become one when I get back."

"Then we'll both be new at this." Cocoa chuckled.

"I suppose you should meet everyone else." Owlpaw mewed and led Cocoa to the main cavern where she was greeted by a frantic Earthpelt.

"There you are Owlpaw," She mewed. "Sheer Mountain said you and Slatepaw ran off somewhere and then Slatepaw came back and said

you were showing some kittypet StarClan and I--" She broke off, staring at Cocoa. "Who's this?"

The rest of the Clan cats, as well as Sheer Mountain and Nettle gathered around to gaze at the newcomer. "This is Cocoa." Owlpaw introduce. "She's going to be this Clan's medicine cat."

Sheer Mountain was the first to step forward. "It's nice to see you again, Cocoa." She dipped her head. "I'm glad to have you in this Clan with me. It's brand new to all of us."

"I don't really know if I can do it." Cocoa admitted.

"Neither do I." Sheer Mountain mewed with an exhausted laugh. "This whole Clan life and StarClan thing is new to me too. At least we'll be in this together."

"Right." Cocoa purred. "Together."

Chapter 16

"Sheer Mountain you have got to stop panicking." Nettle mewed, eating a mouse not far from the loner who paced in circles. "You're going to carve a path in the stone with all your pacing."

"I just can't calm down." Sheer Mountain replied. "Today is the day if I find out I even have a Clan to lead." She stopped for just a moment to look at the rouge who was incredibly calm. "Not to mention I am also learning the warrior code today."

"Owlpaw hasn't taught you anything about it?"

"Not really." Sheer Mountain continued her pacing. "She said she was going to but figured it would be better for me to learn with my future Clanmates. *If* they become my Clanmates at all, that is."

"I'm sure at least one or two will." Nettle finished off her mouse and rose to her paws, approaching Sheer Mountain and forcing her to stop pacing once again. "Plus, you already have Clanmates. You have me, your kits and now Cocoa. She's a little skittish but she'll get there with the rest of us. If we have to start small then we start small."

Sheer Mountain took a deep breath, trying her best to be soothed by Nettle's words. "Thank you, Nettle."

"Of course." Nettle purred. "I think we'll have a decently sized Clan by the end of the day. A whole new family."

Sheer Mountain enjoyed the thought, but no matter what happened Nettle was right about one thing. Sheer Mountain already had some cats behind her, and she was incredibly grateful to have Nettle at her side. *Something about her keeps my mind clear.* Sheer Mountain thought, watching the rouge affectionately.

"Our first cats are arriving!" Fennelpaw announced, the LichenClan apprentice had been keeping watch. Sheer Mountain's fears

suddenly kicked up again and she found herself frozen. She felt Nettle's tail on her pelt and the sparks that followed unthawed her frozen paws.

"Come on," Nettle purred. "Let's go see." Nettle limped away, waving her tail and exciting Sheer Mountain's heart. Nettle's wound was completely healed according to Owlpaw, but she would always have a limp. However, it didn't slow Nettle down at all. She still hunted skillfully and she was quick with battle moves too. *She'll make an incredible Clan cat.*

Sheer Mountain followed Nettle and saw that the first cats to arrive were Spider and a ginger she-cat that Sheer Mountain hadn't met. *This must be the friend he mentioned.* "Good afternoon." Sheer Mountain greeted. "Is this your friend?"

"It is." Spider mewed and gazed affectionately at the she-cat.

"My name is Ginger." She dipped her head. "Spider told me you had a great offer, so I had to see for myself."

"Well I'm happy to welcome you." Sheer Mountain bowed her head. "Please, help yourself to some fresh-kill while we wait for the others."

"Don't mind if I do." Ginger strode in while Spider followed suit towards the fresh-kill pile where Berryheart was sitting. *We went through so much work to make these cats feel welcomed.* Sheer Mountain noted. *I hope it works.* The next cat to arrive was Mossie, the excitable kittypet. She was eager to talk to every cat, and was quickly befriended by Sheer Mountain's kits.

After Mossie was the longer Trout, followed by Briar, Hazel and River. Soon enough more and more cats started showing up. The loner Dew showed up as well, followed by a group of kittypets named Kip, Polly and Melon. The ill-tempered loner named Rick showed up as well as more rouges by the name of Yew, Ant and Flick. The last cat to show up was the loner Turnip. After some waiting, the Clan cats decided to start.

They all gathered in the center of Clan where the Clanless cats,

Sheer Mountain was unsure where to sit, but she eventually decided on sitting closer to the Clan cats with Nettle, Cocoa and her kits at her side.

"Thank you all for coming," Earthpelt spoke up. "We're glad to see so many of you showing up here. We understand that what we're about to explain to you all may seem confusing and overwhelming and we will be happy to answer any questions."

The group remaind silent other than some low whispering.

"To start," Seedclaw mewed. "We shall introduce ourselves. My name is Seedclaw and this is my apprentice, Fennelpaw. We are from LichenClan."

"I'm Leafdawn and this is my apprentice, Slatepaw. We hail from AshClan."

"I'm Earthpelt and this is Owlpaw, we come from SunClan."

"And my name is Berryheart, my apprentice is Leopardpaw. We come from MoonClan."

Earthpelt looked to Sheer Mountain. *I should probably introduce myself too, I guess.* "My name is Sheer Mountain," She rose her voice and stood up, her pelt burning as all the eyes stared at her. "I am going to be the leader of this Clan."

"And I'm Cocoa," The shy cat spoke quietly. "I'm going to be the medicine cat." Both she-cats sat down, feeling incredibly uncomfortable. *I guess I have to get used to that.*

"Those are the four Clans that if you chose to, you will be living alongside."

"What's an apprentice do?" Hazel called from the group."

"I'm glad you asked," Leafdawn answered. "Throughout the Clan there are several roles. The biggest one being warriors. Warriors are the ones who hunt and protect the Clan. All of you, except for the young ones, will become warriors. When she-cats are expecting kits they will move to the nursery where they will care for their kits.

When the kits are old enough they will become apprentices and be assigned a warrior to be their mentor. Clans also have elders, when cats are too old to continue hunting they will retire and provide stories and wisdom to their Clanmates.

"Clans also have speciality roles. Every Clan has a leader, a cat gifted nine lives to lead their Clan. Every leader also has a deputy, and every Clan has a medicine cat. A cat who dedicates their lives to healing instead of fighting."

"Cats don't actually have nine lives, though." Turnip pointed out. "It's just an old mother's tale."

"Not for Clan cats it isn't." Earthpelt explained. "The next point we need to talk about is StarClan. Us Clan cats believe that when we die, we join StarClan and continued to watch over and communicate with the Clans. Medicine cats are most commonly the ones who communicate with them, but leaders can as well."

"You really believe in that?" Rick growled.

"We're not asking you to believe in StarClan right away." Seedclaw added. "As a former kittypet, I know it can be difficult. We simply ask you to open up your hearts to StarClan and trust in your Clanmates."

Rick grumbled, but did not make another remark. "The next thing we need to talk about is the warrior code." Sheer Mountain tensed slightly. "The warrior code is a set of rules that all Clan cats must know and follow. Breaking the warrior code can result in punishment, the severity depends on which rule was broken as well was what your leader wants."

"I'll start us off," Earthpelt spoke up. "We'll take turns explaining these codes." Sheer Mountain listened intently. "The first rule is to defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life. You may have friends in other Clans, but your loyalty must remain to your Clan as one day you may meet them in battle." Sheer Mountain blinked. *Sounds intense.* "At this moment, the Clans are at a time of peace but that will more than likely change in the future. You are allowed to be friendly, but you must remember they are from a different Clan

than yours.

"This also applies to mates as well. It is considered forbidden to take a mate from a different Clan. The conflict that arrises from this can lead to bloodshed and heartache."

"The second rule," Leafdawn spoke up. "Do not hunt or trespass on another Clan's territory." We have borders for a reason, and you will too. Each Clan needs their own prey and you are not allowed to steal prey from others. This also means that other Clans cannot steal from you and you have a right to challenge any cat who takes prey from your Clan."

Sheer Mountain heard some low whispers from the group, but no one spoke up and Seedclaw continued. "Elders, queens, sick and injured cats must be fed before the rest of the Clan. Unless they have permission, apprentices may not eat until they have hunted to feed the Clan." As warriors you have a responsibility to look out and care for your Clanmates. You have the strength of a fully grown warrior, whereas elders or a cat who is sick during leaf-bare does not. Prey could mean life or death for them." That was a rule that Sheer Mountain had already been living by, she always fed her kits and Tumbleweed before herself.

Berryheart was next to speak. "Prey is killed only to be eaten. Give thanks to StarClan for it's life. This code essentially means don't play with your food. In harsh seasons, prey is incredibly valuable and is not to be toyed with. That prey gave its life so that we could live ours."

"I'm not giving thanks to no dead cats for my food." Rick grumbled, a couple of loners laughed.

Earthpelt continued without comment. "A kit must be at least six moons old to become an apprentice. This ensures that the apprentice is not only mentally strong enough, but physically strong enough to endure the training and possible fights."

"Newly appointed warriors will keep a silent vigil for one night after receiving their warrior name. The brunt of you won't be doing

this, but any new warriors made will. This is sort of a final test to see if warriors are truly mature and disciplined enough for their new responsibilities as a warrior."

"We're going to be talking about deputies a lot," Seedclaw spoke up. "To start, a cat cannot be made deputy without having mentored at least one apprentice. This is to make sure that the deputy is able to give orders and guide other cats. Again, your first deputy will be exempt from this but Sheer Mountain I suggested giving one of the apprentices to the cat you chose for your deputy." *Right. I have to pick a deputy and decide on the cats I trust enough to teach my kits.* She glanced at Nettle. *You'll definitely be one of them.* Her kits loved Nettle.

Berryheart continued. "The deputy will become leader when the current Clan leader dies or retires. When Clan leaders chose a deputy, they are choosing a cat who could one day succeed them and take over their Clan, which is why Clan leaders must chose wisely."

Great. More pressure. Sheer Mountain thought anxiously but continued as Earthpelt spoke up. "After the death or retirement of the current deputy, a new one must be chosen before moonhigh."

"What's the point of that?" Kip questioned.

"So the Clan isn't left unprotected." Earthpelt mewed. "I remember hearing tales of an old AshClan leader whose mate was his deputy. When his mate died he was so heartbroken that he failed to chose a new deputy before moonhigh. The following day, he died and the Clan was left leaderless." *Is it wrong to chose a mate as deputy?* Sheer Mountain thought. "Leaders can chose whoever they want as their deputy, but they must be prepared for what might happen when that deputy dies."

"A gathering of all four Clans is held at the full moon during a truce that lasts for the night," Leafdawn continued. "There shall be no fighting at this time. It's important for the Clans to meet and discuss what is going on. They will share news of new warriors and apprentices, or deaths. It is meant to be a time of peace and fighting is strictly forbidden."

"What happens if two cats fight?" Ginger questioned.

"Usually StarClan will send a cloud to cover the moon and the gathering will end. It's very rare though. Whichever cats started the fight will probably be punished by their leader."

Ginger gave a nod and Seedclaw was up. "Boundaries must be checked and marked daily. Challenge all trespassing cats. Your territory is yours to protect, not only from the other Clans but from badgers, foxes or other cats. Don't feel the need to kill other cats, but always address them and demand what they are doing. You have a right to protect your territory."

"No warrior can neglect a kit in pain or danger, even if that kit is from a different Clan." Berryheart mewed. "Kits have no rivalries, they are the hope and future of all Clans and they must be protected. If you see a kit in danger, it is your duty to protect it." That was one of the codes that probably made the most sense to Sheer Mountain.

"The word of the Clan leader is the warrior code." Earthpelt explained. "Sheer Mountain is your leader, and what she says is what you must do unless you feel that she is threatening your lives, then you may discuss it with her."

"I have a question," Rick spoke up once again. *Why is he even here?* Sheer Mountain thought bitterly. "Who decided that she gets to lead this Clan?"

"She was chosen by StarClan." Earthpelt explained.

"Pah," Rick shook his head. "Y'all are insane." He rose to his paws. "I think I've heard enough. All of this nonsense about rule following and dead cats in the stars makes me think all of you have bees in your brain. If any of the rest of you lot have a lick of sense of you'll follow me out." The loner turned away and stomped out of the cavern, but much to Sheer Mountain's surprise, no other cats followed him.

"I understand StarClan is difficult to understand," Owlpaw raised her voice. "But StarClan is the reason we are here, and the reason

why Sheer Mountain has been chosen to be your leader and why Cocoa was chosen to be your medicine cat. Sheer Mountain is not above any of you, she doesn't get to eat before any of you, she will be there to guide you and protect you." *What if they don't see me as a leader?* Sheer Mountain began to fret.

However, no other cat spoke up and Leafdawn could continue. "An honorable warrior does not need to kill other cats to win their battles, unless it is necessary for self-defense or they are outside the warrior code." Leafdawn explained. "We try our best not to kill other Clan cats. If you feel your life is in danger, or they do not follow the warrior code then you can do everything you can to defend yourself."

Seedclaw's eyes grew serious and his tone was loud and clear. "A warrior rejects the soft life of a kittypet." He spoke. "I know there are kittypets among us, and I was once a kittypet myself but something you must understand is that you cannot have a paw in each world. You either sacrifice the comforts of kittypet life or you stay with them. As a warrior your will face threats, illness and harsh weather. Life is not easy, but it is far more rewarding than the life of a kittypet. I joined LichenClan many moons ago, and I do not have any regrets about leaving my life as a kittypet behind."

"Why did you join your Clan?" Polly spoke up.

"I fell in love with a she-cat named Mossleaf. We eventually had kits, and they had kits. Even though she is no longer with me, I know she is waiting for me in the stars. I love the life I live, even without her." Sheer Mountain was warmed by Seedclaw's story. *No one could guess that he used to be a kittypet.*

"And finally," Berryheart mewed. "Each Clan has the right to be proud and independent, but in times of trouble they must forget their boundaries and fight side by side to protect each other. Each Clan must help each other so that no Clan will fall. There will be struggles that affect every single Clan. You will be included this as well, if your Clan is in dire straits then you can reach out for help."

"What kind of trouble will happen?" Spider questioned.

"There was once a horrible cat by the name of Thornstar," Earthpelt began. "Originally exiled from SunClan he took over AshClan after murdering their leader. He attempted to destroy all four Clans so he could rule them all. The Clans had to fight together to stop him. And not too long ago, the Clans used to live somewhere else but their home had started to die and they had to work together to travel to a new home, where they currently live."

"That is every rule of the warrior code." Leafdawn mewed. "The rules we live by, the rules that separate us from other cats. Now that you've heard the rules you will have to follow, if you wish to stay and join this Clan, then rise. If you wish to leave, then we will not stop you."

Sheer Mountain's jaw dropped as she watched every single cat in the cavern stand up. "It seems a little strange," Trout mewed. "But the thought of working together through the harsh seasons seems a little too good to pass up."

"I agree." Spider mewed. "It seems like a life worth living."

"It sounds much easier having a territory full of prey just for us that we don't have to fight over." River mewed.

"Over the next several days we will work together to teach you battle moves and hunting techniques, as well as what to expect when we get there." Earthpelt mewed.

"When do we get cool names?" Mossie questioned.

Leafdawn purred. "I suppose once you get to your new home and Sheer Mountain is made leader she can chose names for you all." Once again, all eyes rested on Sheer Mountain. *I have to come up with names for all of them?* Sheer Mountain tensed. *What if they hate the names I give them. Maybe I could tell them they can pick their own names...*

"You will all live here now," Seedclaw mewed. "You will start to understand what its like to live with others but chances are you camp will be bigger than this."

I should say something. Sheer Mountain's paws twitched. *I'm their leader, it's my responsibility.* Sheer Mountain cleared her throat, getting everyone's attention. "I just want to say," She struggled to keep her voice steady. "Thank you all for agreeing to come on this journey with me. I know it's strange, but we're all from the same way of life, even you kittypets. This is not the life we were born into but it is the life we will make our own. Please don't think of me as above you, I only want to be a Clanmate to you all. We're in this together."

At her words, a lot of the cats who seemed most tense seem to relax. Some of them even gave her a small cheer and the Clan cats all looked at her with approval. Owlpaw especially had pride swelling in her blue eyes.

"Spoken like a true leader." Nettle spoke softly beside her. "You'll do great, Sheer Mountain. I know you will."

Chapter 17

"The next move you're going to learn is something we commonly teach in AshClan." Leafdawn explained, looking over the group of cats. "AshClan cats fight fiercely and without hesitation." She looked to Slatepaw who faced his mentor. "When you feel as if you've been backed into a corner and there's no way to run then you must fight." Slatepaw backed up against the nearby stone wall and ducked his head. "This is when you can become the most dangerous."

Leafdawn faced her apprentice, lashing her tail. "Your opponent can become vulnerable during this time, because they think that they've won. When they're about to deliver the final blow to take you down, you strike forward with the speed of an adder. You can either strike their face or deliver a blow to the throat. Remember, you're not trying to kill your opponent. If you retract your claws and deliver a powerful blow to their neck, you can completely wind them and make it back to your Clan or somewhere safe."

Leafdawn hissed and backed Slatepaw up against the wall, Sheer Mountain watched as Slatepaw pressed his backside against the stone. At first it looked like Slatepaw was cowering, but Sheer Mountain could see that he was actually preparing to strike. He shot forward at blinding speed, his paw tapping Leafdawn's throat and causing her to stumble backwards.

Slatepaw quickly skirted around the edge of Leafdawn and got away from her, back to the other cats. "It may seem easy," Leafdawn mewed. "But if you were actually risk of losing your life your might react differently. In the heat of battle you need to keep your mind clear and be aware of what's happening around you. Where are your enemies? Where are your exits? As you live in your territory for an extended amount of time you will eventually learn every nook and cranny it has to offer. Fighting in your own home is always the advantage."

Sheer Mountain listened eagerly, the day after the meeting, they had started training. They had broken the cats up into groups and

had them learning with each Clan about different styles of fighting. Sheer Mountain thought herself to be a relatively skilled fighter, but the Clans had such complex and precise attacks, it was interesting to learn them all.

In order to keep training easier for each cat, the oldest cats were split into groups of four and would spend time training with a different Clan. The younger cats who would become apprentices which was, Melon, Mossie, Finch, Wren and Sparrow were all spending their time learning the ways of the warrior, they would receive their actual training when they were assigned mentors and Cocoa was getting trained by Owlpaw.

In Sheer Mountain's group she was paired with Turnip, Dew and Ant and their first day they had been with SunClan, but today they were with AshClan. Sheer Mountain had enjoyed learning all the moves, but was amazed that SunClan and AshClan had such wildly different fighting styles. Leafdawn had told them that AshClan cats never turn tail and run, but Earthpelt had taught them that sometimes you need to run in order to turn the fight in your favor.

"We'll have you try this move now." Leafdawn mewed, pulling Sheer Mountain out of her thoughts. "Sheer Mountain you'll be with Ant, and Trout you'll be with Dew. Try and replicate exactly what Slatepaw and I did."

Sheer Mountain looked to Ant. The small sized rouged didn't talk a lot, but Sheer Mountain had worked with him yesterday as well. He was a quick witted fighter, she would enjoy getting to know him. "Do you want to go first?"

"Sure." Ant replied and backed himself up against the wall. Sheer Mountain did her best to get in the fighting spirit, she flattened her ears and hissed sharply at Ant. Ant backed down and pressed against the wall, lowering his head and baring his teeth. In a flash, the black tom shot forward and Sheer Mountain felt his paw connect to her throat. She wasn't expecting such force and she fell backwards, coughing from the force.

"Sorry." Ant called, flattening his ears in embarrassment. "I didn't mean to hit you so hard." He padded up to Sheer Mountain who

was still trying to catch her breath. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah." Sheer Mountain said through a rough mew before rising to her paws.

"It might be hard to realize that you're just training, and not actually fighting. As long as you keep your claws sheathed we should be fine." Leafdawn mewed. "While Sheer Mountain recovers, why don't you two go?"

Sheer Mountain watched as Dew backed himself up against the wall and Turnip faced him, barring his teeth. Dew shot forward, not as quick as Ant or Slatepaw, but with enough force. His paw pressed against Turnip's throat and it didn't seem to phase him much, but Turnip backed off anyway for the sake of training.

"Good job." Leafdawn dipped her head. "Though Dew you could stand to be a little faster. Now switch." Sheer Mountain watched the two of them repeat it, Turnip was quicker but didn't have much power behind his blow.

"Sorry." Turnip apologized. "I don't do a lot of fighting, I'm a little out of practice."

"Same here." Dew agreed. "I lived pretty peacefully."

"It's alright." Leafdawn assured him. "That's why we're here. Your turn Sheer Mountain." Feeling better after her throat strike, Sheer Mountain backed herself against the wall, flattening her ears. She faced Ant and realized just how intimating the little rouge actually was. *I'm glad he'll be in my Clan!* Sheer Mountain used all of her strength to shoot forward and hit Ant's throat with enough force to wind him, but not hurt him.

"Very good, Sheer Mountain." Leafdawn praised. "Next time I think I'll split you two up. It's clear that both of you already have some decent fighting experience, Dew and Turnip could both benefit from learning from you two."

Sheer Mountain was paired up with Dew instead of Ant and the two of them continued to work on more fighting moves that Leafdawn

and Slatepaw showed them. When training came to an end, Sheer Mountain felt incredibly sore, but also invigorated. She loved learning new fighting moves, with each day that passed she was getting more and more excited about becoming a Clan cat.

Her future Clanmates were as well. Many of them had come to her, saying what they wanted their warrior names to be. Sheer Mountain would probably end up using some of them, it would definitely make her life easier. She didn't have to worry about the apprentices right away as their names would just add a "paw" to the end. She had spoken to her kits about it, and they had all expressed their excitement. Sparrow had even loved the idea of his name becoming Sparrowpaw.

Sheer Mountain had also wondered about her own name. Owlpaw had told her that whichever cats gave her her nine lives would probably chose her name and that Clan would be named after her. The original Clan leaders had all been Sunstar, Ashstar, Moonstar and Lichenstar.

She also had to decide on a deputy. Sheer Mountain had asked the Clan cats if she could chose a deputy now or if she had to wait, and if she was able to tell that cat. Earthpelt had explained to her that she could chose her deputy now and it would probably be better to tell them earlier on so they would have time to prepare, it just wouldn't be official.

Sheer Mountain already knew which cat she wanted to be her deputy, the one cat she trusted deeply, despite not knowing her very long. When Sheer Mountain and her training group returned to the cavern, Sheer Mountain had seen that Nettle's group had already returned. Nettle was paired with River, Ginger and Yew.

I need to get this done. Sheer Mountain mewed and padded up to Nettle. "Hey, can I talk to you for a moment?" She questioned.

"Sure." Nettle purred and rose to her paws. Sheer Mountain led Nettle to her den where they stepped inside, her kits were out learning with Leopardpaw and Fennelpaw so she didn't have to worry about them. "How was training?" Nettle questioned. "You were with Leafdawn, right?"

Sheer Mountain nodded. "It was great, AshClan has a very interesting fighting style."

"You haven't trained with MoonClan yet." Nettle laughed. "You know they swim? I told Berryheart she couldn't give me all the prey in the forest to get me in the water."

Sheer Mountain laughed with the rouge, but she had to change the subject. "There was something I've been meaning to ask you, Nettle."

"What's up?" Nettle listened, more focused now.

"This whole Clan thing is...crazy." She admitted. "And I'm not sure if I can even do it, but you've been here to calm me down so I was wondering..." She hesitated a moment. "If you would want to become my deputy?"

"You really want me to become your deputy?" Nettle stared in surprise.

Sheer Mountain nodded. "I don't know the other cats enough, and I know we'll get to know each other soon enough but I want to start my leadership with someone I trust at my side."

"I never expected this." Nettle's eyes softened. "Seems like so long ago that you hated me." Sheer Mountain licked her chest in embarrassment. "And yet you've become one of the best friends I've ever known in such a short amount of time. So I guess what I'm trying to say is..." She paused, making Sheer Mountain nervous. "Yes, I'll be your deputy, Sheer Mountain."

"Thank you so much." Sheer Mountain breathed out in relief. "I know with you to help me I'll be able to get through this." Nettle purred and looked at Sheer Mountain with such gentle eyes. Sheer Mountain's heart began to flutter and she let out a purr. *I'm so glad I'll have Nettle with me. When I'm with her, I feel like I can do anything.*

Chapter 18

"What does this one do?" Owlpaw gently nudged forward a dock leaf.

"Uhh..." Cocoa gave the herb a sniff. Her yellow eyes seemed to be lost, as she desperately tried to figure it out. "Sorrel?"

Owlpaw shook her head. "No, this is dock." She swept forward a sorrel leaf with her tail. "*This* is sorrel. Dock has a tangy scent and taste." She explained. "Do you know what the two of them do?"

"Dock is for..." Cocoa trailed off, thinking. "Hunger--no," She corrected herself. "Sorrel is for hunger."

"Good." Owlpaw purred. "Dock is for...injuries? Like scratches?"

Owlpaw nodded. "It's good for scratches, yes. You chew it up and rub it into scratches to help soothe them, but it can sting a bit."

"I feel like I'll never get this." Cocoa admitted, sounding defeated.

"You'll get." Owlpaw assured her. "You've only been learning for a few days, and usually medicine cats are trained by medicine cats, not warrior apprentices. I don't really know all that much. I know how to treat some minor sickness and wounds and that's about it."

"But you saved Nettle's life right?" Cocoa checked.

"Yeah," Owlpaw sighed. "But I still think an actual medicine cat could've done better." She admitted. "She still has a limp."

"But I've seen her hunting, it doesn't look like it slows her down any."

"I suppose." *There's also Tumbleweed...* The pain of Owlpaw's past failures clawed at her chest but she quickly pushed them away. "Has Mosscloud visited you at all?"

"She did the night of the meeting." Cocoa replied. "She mostly told

me about catmint and greencough. It sounds scary."

"It is." Owlpaw nodded. "Or so I've been told, I've never actually been a live through a leaf-bare yet." *I hope I don't get it.* She shivered, wondering what would become of her if she got greencough. "Anyway," Owlpaw replied and picked up some tansy.

"Oh!" Cocoa exclaimed. "That's tansy! I know that because you always take it for your cough right?"

Owlpaw nodded. "I know the taste of tansy all too well."

"How did you get that cough anyway?"

"When my mother gave birth to my littermates and I, we were a whole moon early. She didn't even know she was expecting kits. We were all very small and weak, myself and my brother Firekit in particular." She thought about her siblings, wishing she could've met Firekit. "There's an illness that attacks newborn kits in particular, and we all got it. Firekit died and I was close behind him until my medicine cat saved me.

"I continued to be sick for a while afterwards, even as I got my strength back I still wasn't completely better, I'm still not. All my littermates grew into normal sized apprentices, but I stayed small. Even now, I'm the smallest apprentice here. Even Mossie is bigger than me and it won't be long before Sheer Mountain's kits are too."

"Is that why you're becoming a medicine cat?" Cocoa questioned.

"Kind of?" Owlpaw shrugged. "I suck as a warrior apprentice. I'm no good at fighting and hunting. I don't think it's anything to do with my illness rather than just me being weak. Then Pebblestep taught me about herbs and it was like I could finally do something right. It felt like my destiny, like what I was meant to do."

"That's kind of what it feels like for me too." Cocoa stared at her paws. "But I'm still worried I'm not doing this right. What if I mess up?"

"Mosscloud told me that as long as medicine cats try their best, then they're doing it right. We can't save every cat, but as long as we try

then we are doing right by our Clans. Like you said, we're both learning. Together."

Cocoa's eyes flashed gratefully and Owlpaw let out a purr. She knew that Cocoa was constantly questioning her own skills, just as Owlpaw had done. It did feel weird that Owlpaw, who was younger than Cocoa, was basically acting as her mentor but it was all they had for now. *Mosscloud will teach her more.* When they returned, Owlpaw was eager to see Cocoa transform into a competent medicine cat every half-moon.

Owlpaw concluded Cocoa's learning for the night and left her to study the herbs while she quelled her hungry belly. She padded out into the cavern, she wasn't used to seeing it so full of cats but they all seemed eager to learn.

The day prior, Sheer Mountain had told the Clan cats that she had chosen Nettle to be her deputy and Owlpaw couldn't be more thrilled. Sheer Mountain and Nettle would surely be a great leader and deputy together. Nettle had also begun practicing being a deputy by organizing hunting patrols, she was a natural.

We have a Clan. Owlpaw thought proudly. *I can't wait to get them home where they can become a true Clan in the eyes of StarClan.* "Owlpaw!" She heard Earthpelt calling her name and saw the Clan cats as well as Sheer Mountain gathered together. Putting her thoughts of food aside, Owlpaw trotted up to the group. "We needed to discuss something."

"Okay." Owlpaw sat down and listened intently.

"We have a full Clan now." Seedclaw explained. "We have a leader, a deputy, a medicine cat, several warriors and even some apprentices. It is time we consider the journey back home."

Owlpaw tensed slightly. *Right. Home.* "We've come to the conclusion that in five sunrises, we will begin the journey back to the Clans. It should be about the time for the gathering once we get home if all goes well."

"We're sure we're ready?" Owlpaw checked, suddenly the thought of

going home was terrifying to her.

"These cats are all learning rather quickly," Leafdawn mewed. "Even the kittypets, they will be able to continue to learn from each other through the journey and once we get them home."

"How do we explain to the other Clans what we've done?" Slatepaw chimed in. "Will they even believe us?"

"Mosscloud said she would send a sign." Owlpaw replied.

"Isn't Mosscloud like, trapped outside of StarClan?" Slatepaw countered.

"She's been talking as if she will be returning with us." Owlpaw explained.

"When I spoke to her," Sheer Mountain raised her voice. "She explained to me that her destiny was to create this Clan, it's why she's been trapped outside of StarClan. Perhaps when hr mission is complete, they'll finally let her back in."

"That's so cruel." Berryheart whimpered. "Mosscloud is such an old medicine cat." She replied. "I can't imagine being trapped outside, away from your family for so long."

Owlpaw hadn't though about it that way. *I didn't even realize that Mosscloud has been wandering these skies alone for so long. I bet she's excited to return home.*

"We will start telling everyone else and letting the news spread." Seedclaw mewed. "But first I wanted to say something, when we first left on this mission we had no idea what we were doing or looking for, and when we actually got our mission we didn't know if it was even possible and yet here we are. A Clan full of eager cats and home is in sight. I'm so proud of every single cat here, especially you Owlpaw."

All eyes rested on Owlpaw and her pelt burned. "You've done great things, you got us our leader and and our medicine cat. You healed us and kept our faith up. You will be a great medicine cat when you return to SunClan." Each of the Clan cats agreed, except for

Slatepaw but he didn't make any snide remarks either.

Have I really done as good as they say? Owlpaw wondered. *We all worked together for this.* She glanced at Sheer Mountain who gave her a reassuring nod. *Whether it was me, or all of us. We really have done something incredible.*

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After their small meeting ended, Owlapw finally helped herself to some prey and she noticed Sheer Mountain had followed her. "I can't believe it's actually time to leave."

"I know." Owlpaw replied, staring at her paws. "I'll miss you."

"I'll miss you too." Sheer Mountain replied. "It's going to be strange not having you and the Clan cats around." Her eyes were visibly troubled. "What if I mess this up, Owlpaw? What if I'm not a good leader."

"You'll be a great leader, Sheer Mountain." Owlpaw nudged her friend. "I know you will be. We may be in separate Clans, but I'll be a medicine cat so we won't have any rivalry. If you ever need anything, tell Cocoa and she can tell me at the half-moon meetings. Or if you're in dire need, you can send someone to SunClan territory. MoonClan will be between us but you should be able to cross through the gathering hollow."

"What are the territories like?" Sheer Mountain questioned.

"Well, my home is SunClan territory. It's full of large oak trees. We have an old badger den and a small stream. Past the stream is a rockpile where we train. Past that is a river that marks our border with MoonClan. MoonClan's territory is a moor, it's big and very windy but they like it. I don't know where the MoonClan border on the other side is, but that's where your territory will start.

"I've never been there, so I don't know much about it. I know it has trees like SunClan territory, and I think there's a mountain area that Echoheart, the rouge who attacked the Clans, kept her camp. It will probably become your camp too. Then you'll see LichenClan

territory. LichenClan territory is full of thick forestry, it's a huge pain to navigate and I think the back is marshland. Then in between LichenClan and AshClan territory is some more mountains, including a path that leads to the Spirit Garden. That's where you'll go to communicate with StarClan and receive your nine lives.

"AshClan's territory is full of pine trees and is usually pretty shaded and dark. Finally there's the gathering hollow. It's a grass hollow with five big trees in it and a large stone in the middle. This is where the Clans gather. One of those trees is yours." Owlpaw thought back to her very first gathering where she had seen a ghost cat sitting at the base of the unused tree. *Was StarClan telling me this whole time?*

"Wow." Sheer Mountain breathed out. "It seems so big."

"If we come back the way we originally left we'll enter in LichenClan's territory. Then we'll go to the gathering hollow if there's a gathering and you'll meet the other Clans."

"What if they reject us?" Sheer Mountain's paws shuffled nervously.

"Mosscloud will send a sign. They won't dare reject StarClan's will. And if StarClan gives you your nine lives, then they can't stop you at all."

"Has any leader ever been rejected their nine lives?"

"Not that I know of." Owlpaw replied, trying to think. "Thornstar never got his, but many believe it was because he was too scared of being rejected because he never actually tried. He thought he could lead without them and it was his downfall."

"I hear a lot about Thornstar." Sheer Mountain noted. "He was a truly evil cat, wasn't he?" Owlpaw nodded. "A lot of cats also believe that it was his influence that drove Echoheart to such extremes as well. She wanted nothing but revenge on Dawnstar for killing Thornstar, and she would give anything to get it."

"The Clans have such a rich history." Sheer Mountain stared at the sky. "I wonder if I'll learn it all."

"Maybe." Owlpaw looked up as well. "This is certainly a moment in history that no cat will ever forget. A fifth Clan is a major change." *A new Clan is coming, this is big change. Peace doesn't last, Owlpaw.* Slatepaw's words clung to Owlpaw like a burr in her pelt. *Please, StarClan. Let this new Clan live in peace. At least for a while.*

"I just hope everything goes well on the way home." Sheer Mountain sighed.

"It was mostly alright on the way here." Owlpaw explained. "Though we will be travelling in a large group this time."

"What happened on the way here?"

"The only bad thing was us getting chased by a dog and Berryheart hurting her leg, and me falling into the river."

"We'll be going *away* from the river this time." Sheer Mountain purred with amusement, but a moment later her eyes clouded again. "I'll really be leaving my home behind. I grew up here and both of my parents are buried here."

"They'll come with you." Owlpaw promised. "Star and Tumbleweed will be with you the entire way, keeping us safe."

"I hope so." Sheer Mountain closed her eyes. "Thank you for talking with me, Owlpaw." She rose to her paws. "I should make sure that my kits have eaten. I know they're really excited about all of this." She waved her tail. "Goodnight, Owlpaw."

Owlpaw watched Sheer Mountain leave. *Our mission may be coming to an end, but our journey is far from over.*

Chapter 19

Just one day left. Owlpaw reminded herself. *Have to make sure that everything is ready to go.* She and Cocoa had spent the last five days not only studying herbs, but collecting them as well. Owlpaw wanted to make sure they had enough for the whole trip, no matter how long it took. *It will probably take longer since there's so many of us.* Owlpaw noted. *We need to be prepared for injures.* Last time Berryheart had gotten injured, but now Owlpaw was more skilled. *And I have Cocoa with me, even if she is still learning.*

"So what herbs are we going to give everyone before we leave?"

"Sorrel for appetite, daisy to relieve pain, and burnet and chamomile for strength."

"Good." Owlpaw purred. "Could you point those out for me?" She easily picked out sorrel and the daisy leaves, but struggled with the burnet and chamomile. *She's good at remembering names and what they do, but not what they look like.* Owlpaw pointed out the other herbs to Cocoa and left her to study them a little bit. The future Clan cats were all gathered around together, eagerly whispering and talking about their hopes for the future.

They had all begun to settle in quite well. They were making friends with each other, and they all seemed to get along. Even Sheer Mountain and Nettle were getting along with them as well. Sheer Mountain still seemed to be a little awkward, but Nettle fit right in. *They'll become a true Clan soon.* Owlpaw thought happily, but fear still weighed on her mind. She worried about the new Clan, she hoped that they would be accepted by the other Clans, and that they wouldn't have any problems. *What if there's a fox or badger living in their territory and no one knows?*

Owlpaw's thoughts began to race with anxiety, she had so many fears clawing at the back of her head. She glanced at the Clan cats who are also mingling and talking with the future Clan cats. *Are they as worried as I am?* Owlpaw questioned, wondering if she was

the only one who was concerned. In the past four days, her travelmates had been talking about how excited they were to go home.

They were sharing the best parts of Clan life with the Clanless cats, making them even more excited. *I'm excited to return home too, right?* Owlpaw had barely been thinking about home lately, her heart and mind had been so focused on building the Clan and preparing them. She missed her family of course, but when she got back she would have to ask Pebblestep and Honeyfrost if she could become a medicine cat apprentice.

She wasn't sure if they would even let her. *Does a Clan really need three medicine cats?* Owlpaw fretted. *What if they tell me no and I'm forced to live my life as a useless warrior?* She shook her head. *Pebblestep and Honeyfrost would never do that.* Owlpaw had to convince herself. *I'll become a medicine cat and I'll truly be on the right path.* Owlpaw took a deep breath, desperately trying to calm her fears.

But I'll miss these cats. Owlpaw dropped her head. She had become so close to Sheer Mountain as well as Nettle and Cocoa. *Cocoa is so unsure of herself.* Owlpaw noted. *Will she be able to confidently serve her Clan, even with such little training? I'm not a real medicine cat yet.* Owlpaw's claws scraped the stone. *But Mosscloud is.* Cocoa had told Owlpaw that Mosscloud had continued to train her in her sleep. Owlpaw glanced up at the pale gray sky, clouds threatening to rain. *I just hope that these fears will go away.* Owlpaw sighed and tried to come up with something useful to do, but Cocoa was busy studying herbs. *I could always go gather some more.*

Owlpaw started to head to the cavern entrance when Leopardpaw approached. "Where you off to?"

"To collect some more herbs for the journey." Owlpaw explained.

"Want some help? We just got done training Spider's group. I could use some peace and quiet, it's become so loud here."

"Sure." Owlpaw's heart lifted at the thought of spending time with a friend. *Not to mention, us Clan cats will be separating too.* The two

apprentices padded down the stone path into the field.

"I can't believe we're so close to going home." Leoaprdpaw mewed. *Is that all any cat can talk about?*

"Yeah," Owlpaw breathed out, trying to not let her emotions show but failing miserably.

"What's wrong? Aren't you excited?"

"I am, I am." Owlpaw did her best to convince Leoaprdpaw, and herself as well. "I'm just worried, I guess. I'm worried about how the Clan is going to fare once they're on their own. They'll have borders and rules for the first times in their lives."

"I think they'll do just fine, Owlpaw." Leopardpaw purred. "They're already kind of following the warrior code as best they can. I even saw Hazel giving thanks to StarClan for her prey."

"I know, I know." Owlpaw shook her head. "I'm just anxious."

"It makes sense." Leopardpaw mewed. "You out of all us put the most energy into this mission. We all did it together, but I can't help but feel like this was *your* mission."

"My mission?" Owlpaw was confused by her words.

"We're training them and we've been hunting, but this entire time you've been doing all the work. You had to convince Sheer Mountain to join us and you brought us Cocoa and have been training her even though you're not even a medicine cat *apprentice* yet. It makes sense that you're heart is so dedicated to this Clan. You've built this Clan, Owlpaw."

"I guess." Owlpaw dropped her head, her pelt burning. "I just did what StarClan told me to do."

"And you did a great job." Leopardpaw brushed her tail across Owlpaw's pelt. "This is a story they will tell for seasons to come, long after you and I are gone. A tale of the four warriors and four apprentices who built a Clan, but one of them, a little SunClan apprentice who recruited a leader and guided her to StarClan. I

know your Clanmates will be impressed."

Leopardpaw's words *were* reassuring, but Owlpaw was still anxious. "You really think they'll do alright?"

"I do." Leopardpaw nodded. "They've been shaped by warriors, they'll become great warriors in their own time. I know it."

Owlpaw took a deep breath to relax her mind, and decided to set her focus on gathering herbs instead. She and Leopardpaw padded over to the river where they began collecting marigold. The river was flowing slowly today, Owlpaw caught a glimpse of her reflection and stared into the surface. "It's hard to believe I almost died in this river." She spoke up.

"That was scary." Leoardpaw replied. "All of us were convinced you were gone for good, until Sheer Mountain showed up. I've never seen a cat move like that. It was incredible."

"That's where I met Mosscloud for the first time." Owlpaw explained. "But I didn't know who she was at the time."

"Really?"

Owlpaw nodded. "She told me I had been in that spot before. I think she meant I had almost died before, because when I was kit I *did* die, but Pebblestep brought me back to life."

"That's incredible." Leopardpaw flicked the surface of the water with her tail. "Looks like you've been touched by StarClan your whole life." *Maybe.* Owlpaw thought, getting lost in her reflection and thoughts. *Why me, though? Why did StarClan chose me? Do my siblings have great destinies too? Or just me?*

"Let's get this marigold back before you fall in again." Leopardpaw nudged Owlpaw gently, pulling her from her thoughts.

"Right." Owlpaw mewed awkwardly and picked up the bundle of marigold that she had collected. The two of them started back towards the cavern and Owlpaw took in her surroundings. *This is one of the last times I will ever see this place.* She thought. She glanced towards where Nettle had made her cave while she was injured,

and back towards the forest where Raptor had almost killed Owlpaw. *This place has become like a home to me.* Owlpaw thought. *So much has happened, I'll be sad to say goodbye to it.* She couldn't imagine how Sheer Mountain was feeling about it either. *This actually is her home. I hope she'll be okay.*

Owlpaw and Leopardpaw reached the cavern and Owlpaw took her bundle of marigold and stepped into the cave where Cocoa was studying her herbs still. She looked up and looked at the herbs. "What is that? Wait! I know, it's marigold!" Owlpaw purred at her enthusiasm and set the herbs down. They had quite the large pile. *We have more than enough.*

"Good job." Owlpaw praised the she-cat and stared at the herbs for a moment before sitting down by her nest. Since more cats moved into the cavern, the cave where the Clan cats slept had become incredibly crowded with everyone else. *As a medicine cat I'll be sleeping in a den with Honeyfrost and Pebblestep.* Owlpaw noted. *And any sick or injured cats.*

Owlpaw tried to imagine what her life would be as a medicine cat. Leaf-bare would be here soon and she would have to work hard to keep her Clanmates safe and healthy. *I'll help birth kits, and treat battle wounds. There's so much more to learn that what I know.* Owlpaw was genuinely excited to learn about it. She just had to find a way to fight her anxiety about the new Clan and focus on her future as one of SunClan's medicine cats. *This Clan isn't my whole life.* Owlpaw reminded herself. *My future is still vast, so much can happen and I have to be ready for it.*

Chapter 20

Blossompaw twisted away from Mudfall's grasp, kicking up a flurry of leaves as she did so. She leapt back as Mudfall swiped at her muzzle, his paw just barely missing her nose. Blossompaw reared up on her hind legs. *You have to be quick!* She told herself and brought down her forepaw as quick as she could on Mudfall's head. The tom seemed dazed for a moment and Blossompaw stopped, looking at her mentor in fear. "Was that too hard?"

"Maybe a little." Mudfall replied, shaking his head. "But you nailed the move." He purred. *It only took me all day.* Blossompaw thought, twitching her tail. "You're making great strides, Blossompaw."

"Thanks." Blossompaw's body felt sore from the constant training but she felt as if she was getting at least a little better. That particular move had been challenging for her as she was always slow. *You have to be quick since you're leaving yourself open for a belly rake.* Mudfall's words echoed in her mind. "Can we try it again?" Blossompaw pleaded. "I want to make sure I can actually do it and that wasn't just a fluke."

"You're being too hard on yourself, Blossompaw." Mudfall told her, his voice lined with concern. "But yes, we can try it one more time. Afterwards we should head home, I want to see my kits before sunset."

"Alright." Blossompaw agreed and focused on the move. Mudfall shot froward to attack her, once again she twisted after from his grasp, this time even faster nad more graceful than the last. Without hesitation, Blossompaw reared up and instantly brought her paw down on Mudfall's head, this time taking note to be more gentle.

"Great job." Mudfall purred. "You've got this move down." Blossompaw did feel a little better about herself. *I just wish it didn't take me so long.* She scolded herself, but shook off the negative thought. "Now let's go home, I'm starting to get a headache." Blossompaw walked beside her mentor as they padded through

SunClan territory.

Her body ached as well, she trained as much as she possibly could. She and Mudfall would have their usually training sessions with hunting and sometimes practice with the other apprentices, but afterwards Blossompaw and Mudfall would have private training sessions. On days when Mudfall told her to take a break and he would spend time with his kits, Blossompaw would go out on her own and practice the battle moves on invisible opponents.

It had left her exhausted, and she would usually sleep late so she was always tired but her skills were improving. Her entire body was sore as she padded alongside Mudfall, her mind groggy. She was starting to feel a little dizzy and the forest around her was starting to melt together into one color.

What's happening to me? Blossompaw blinked and shook her head. *I feel like my entire world is spinning.* She dragged her paws, unable to find the strength to fully lift them. The path ahead of her blurred and twisted, but Blossompaw continued. *This is fine.* Blossompaw told herself. *This is fine.* Blossompaw took one more step and then darkness consumed her.

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Blossompaw's eyes slowly opened, her eyelids feeling heavy as stones. Her vision was fogged with sleep and confusion and she lifted her head, blinking a few times to clear the fog. She could scent herbs, and quickly realized she was in the medicine cat den. Her mouth was painfully dry and she had a foul taste on her tongue as well as her stomach growling with hunger.

"Oh!" Blossompaw heard an exclamation to the side of her and saw Honeyfrost standing in the medicine cat den entrance. "You're awake."

"What happened?" Blossompaw tried to speak, but her speech was scratchy due to her dry mouth and throat.

"Hold on." Honeyfrost padded over to the small pool of water in the corner of the medicine cat den and picked up a moss ball soaked in

water. "You need to drink something." Blossompaw lapped at the water, the coolness soothed her throat and provided moisture to her mouth.

Once Blossompaw had finished, she could feel her strength trickling back in. "What happened?" She repeated, her voice more clear.

"Mudfall brought you back to camp in a panic, saying you had just collapsed." Honeyfrost explained.

"Is there something wrong with me?" Blossompaw questioned, feeling slightly panicked.

Honeyfrost shook her head. "Mudfall explained that you two have been doing extra training lately, and even though he's been telling you to take breaks, your brothers told me that you go out and train on your own. You go to sleep late and you wake up early without giving your body any time to heal or recover from all the training. You've overworked yourself, Blossompaw."

Blossompaw lowered her head. "I just wanted to train more, I'm not good at fighting."

"And you think training yourself into an early trip to StarClan is the way to do it?" Honeyfrost's usually calm voice was stern. "You can't continue doing this to yourself." Honeyfrost sighed. "I know you feel like you need to be the best, but there is such thing as too much training." Blossompaw dropped her head. "And I've spoken to Mudfall and Pebblestep and we all agree that the best course of action is for you to take some days off training and rest."

"I'm being *punished?*" Blossompaw stared in disbelief.

"Don't think of it as a punishment." Honeyfrost purred. "Think of it as forced relaxation. Maybe it will teach you to take better care of yourself." Blossompaw stared at her paws in annoyance. "You're free to go if you feel you have the strength, come back to us later tonight for some dock leaves. We've been lining your nest with them to help soothe your aches."

"Fine." Blossompaw grumbled and rose from her nest, shocked at

how stiff and sore her muscles were. She tried to hide it from the medicine cat, but ended up limping out of her den anyway. She stepped into the early morning light. *Did I sleep through the night?* She questioned.

"Blossompaw!" Blossompaw heard the shrill cry of her mother and was suddenly swarmed by her. "Oh I was so worried about you!" She whimpered.

"I'm fine." Blossompaw brushed her mother off.

"Pebblestep told me that you've been overworking yourself. Why? You're such a young apprentice why are you trying to get so far ahead."

"I'm *not* trying to get ahead." Blossompaw argued. "I'm *trying* to catch up. Both Rushpaw and Oakpaw are so much better at fighting than I am, I just had to learn more to catch up with them."

"Oh, Blossompaw." Briarrose mewed sadly. "You shouldn't compare yourself to your brothers. You're not them." *Everyone keeps telling me that.* Blossompaw twitched her tail in annoyance.

Much to Blossompaw's dismay, Rushpaw and Oakpaw spotted her as well. "Blossompaw!" Oakpaw called and padded over with Rushpaw behind him.

"Glad to see you out and about." Rushpaw mewed. "We were so scared when Mudfall brought you back unconscious."

"I'm fine." Blossompaw grumbled. *I don't want to hear this.* She thought bitterly. "I'm going to get some prey." She stormed away from her family and picked up a squirrel, she began sheepishly pecking at her food. *Now I'm going to fall even farther behind them.* She scraped her claws against the stone hollow.

"Feeling better?" A soothing voice spoke and Blossomapw looked up to see her father. *Great.*

"Yeah, I'm fine." Blossompaw growled.

"Woah there." Yarrowtail chuckled. "No need to claw my ears off.

I'm worried about you, Blossompaw. Not just because you fainted after training, either." Blossompaw looked at her father. "I know why you overworked yourself, and I get it."

"Yeah right." Blossompaw began staring at her prey.

"I really do." Yarrowtail sat down across from her, resting his fluffy tail across his paws. "I talked to Mudfall and he said you felt like you were falling behind in your training, when in reality you weren't. You may not have been succeeding as much, but you were completely on par with an apprentice of your age."

"But Rushpaw and Oakpaw are better than me." She whimpered.

"And Cinderflame was better than me, she always has been. When we were apprentices, Cinderflame was on a completely different level than me. She was a quick learner, she was strong and she was confident. I was skittish and slow and I always thought that because my sister was doing better than me, that I was failing."

Yarrowtail nuzzled Blossompaw's cheek. "I know you feel as if you're falling behind, and no one can probably change that, it just means you are a driven warrior. But please, Blossompaw, don't overwork yourself. You're no use as a warrior if you're broken down and exhausted. Work hard, but don't work *too* hard."

Blossompaw looked at her father gratefully. *He actually understands.* "Thank you." She purred.

"Anytime." Yarrowtail rose to his paws. "That's what fathers are for." He gently rasped his tongue over Blossompaw's forehead and she was feeling at least a little better. She finished the rest of her squirrel and continued with her day. She quickly grew bored just sitting around camp, she entertained herself with the kits for a short while until it was finally night time.

She crossed the camp and approached the medicine cat den to get the dock leaves that Honeyfrost had told her about. As she approached, she heard the voice of Pebblestep. "I had a sign, Honeyfrost." She mewed. "About the travelling cats."

Blossompaw stopped in her tracks, she strained to listen. *I know eavesdropping is wrong.* She told herself. *But if it's about Owlpaw I need to know.* "What was it?" Honeyfrost questioned.

"While I was out gathering herbs I saw a white owl flying over the trees, coming from the direction our Clanmates left. I think it means they will be returning to us soon."

"That's so good to hear." Honeyfrost breathed a sigh of relief. "Have you told Dawnstar?"

"Not yet." Pebblestep replied. "I hope the other medicine cats have had similar signs." She mewed. "If they're not home by the next gathering we can discuss it with the other Clans." *Owlpaw is coming home soon!* Blossompaw wanted to leap with joy, but she kept her composure.

She padded up to the medicine cat den, acting as if she hadn't just listened to their conversation. She poked her head in and caught the attention of Honeyfrost. "Welcome back, Blossompaw." The golden and white she-cat mewed, turning back to the herb store.

"Come in." Pebblestep urged. Blossompaw stepped inside and sat down at Pebblestep's instruction. The medicine cat began running her paws over Blossompaw's body. "How do you feel?"

"Sore." Blossompaw replied. "And stiff."

"We'll give you some marigold as well as the dock leaves tonight." Pebblestep explained, grabbing a golden flower and chewing it up. She rubbed it on the spots that hurt the most and Honeyfrost gave Blossompaw a bundle of dock leaves.

"Put those in your nest and they should help with the soreness. Get some rest, Blossompaw. The more you rest the sooner you can get back to training."

Blossompaw dipped her head as thanks and moved to the apprentice den, lining her nest with the dock leaves. She could already feel the marigold staring to work on her stiff body, she curled up into her nest, letting the soothing herbs relax her body.

Owlpaw is coming home soon. She thought happily. *Everything will be better once I have my sister back.*

Chapter 21

"Do you remember everything I told you?" Sheer Mountain looked intently at Finch, Wren and Sparrow.

"Stay with the group." Wren mewed.

"Don't play with weird things." Sparrow added.

"Listen to everything the Clan cats say." Finch concluded.

"What else?"

"Stay away from anything that isn't one of our future Clanmates or the Clan cats."

"Dogs, other cats and twolegs are dangerous."

"Be *very* careful when crossing the thunderpath."

"Good." Sheer Mountain looked over her three kits as they wiggled with excitement. "Are you three ready? Our lives are about to change completely."

"I'm ready!" Finch jumped up. "It's going to be so cool being a Clan cat!"

"Yeah!" Wren chirped. "It's going to be so much fun once we actually become apprentices."

"Sheer Mountain," Sheer Mountain heard a voice behind her. She looked over her should to see Nettle approaching. "Are you ready?"

"Y-yeah." Sheer Mountain's voice trembled. "Kits, go with Nettle. I'll be right out." The kits ran out of the den but Nettle remaind for a moment.

"Are you okay?" Nettle questioned.

"Yes." Sheer Mountain dipped her head. "I just need a moment."

"Alright." Nettle dipped her head and vanished from sight.

"I'm really doing this." Sheer Mountain spoke to herself, looking at hers and her kit's nest, as well as Tumbleweed's. She couldn't bring it upon herself to take it down. She walked over to it and breathed in the familiar scent that was starting to fade. "You're coming with me, right?" She spoke to the empty nest. "You'll be there for me, right?" Her voice was weak and she let out a shaky sigh. "I can't believe I'm leaving this place." Sheer Mountain had been born in this cavern. She had raised the three kits in this den and she had lost both her parents here.

"But now," She mewed almost silently. "A whole new adventure is awaiting us." She closed her eyes, taking in the scent of the cave one last time. She forced herself to turn away from the den she had slept in her whole life and pad out into the open cavern.

She walked up to the group, standing near the Clan cats at the front. She met up with Owlpaw who gave her the foul tasting travel herbs. "Thank you." She dipped her head. "Are you ready for this?"

Owlpaw nodded shakily. "Are you?"

"I think so." Sheer Mountain breathed out and looked to Seedclaw who seemed to be taking charge.

"Has every cat taken their travelling herbs? If not, please go see Owlpaw and Cocoa now." When no cat moved, Seedclaw continued. "We are now ready to leave, this is going to be a long journey. When we came here it took us about ten days of travel, five of which we spent because one of us was injured. Though we have a much larger group this time, so I suspect the journey will take around the same amount of time, hopefully a little shorter. We will be dealing with twolegplaces and a thunderpath, and we will have to scale some mountains to get into the Clan territories so please stay safe. Work together and look our for one another. Don't forget you are a Clan now, keep each other safe."

Sheer Mountain felt several eyes on her. *They want me to say*

something. She took a deep breath and lifted her head, speaking loudly. "As we set out on this journey together, I just want to take this time to thank you again. Thank you for putting your faith in me, as well as each other to build this Clan. We are all starting our lives over it seems, but none of us will ever be alone again. StarClan will guide us to our new home, and we will thrive amongst the other Clans, I know we will."

The cats cheered, they were all incredibly eager to get moving and Sheer Mountain picked up the energy from her future Clanmates. *No.* Sheer Mountain corrected herself. *They already are my Clanmates.*

"Good speech." Owlpaw praised. "You really are a leader, Sheer Mountain." Sheer Mountain was warmed by Owlpaw's praise.

"Let's head out!" Seedclaw announced and the first steps of the journey were taken as the large group of cats made their way out of the cavern and down the stone path. Sheer Mountain glanced at the overlook as she passed, knowing her parents' bodies were resting at the bottom. *I'll see you there.* She promised.

They stepped out into the open field, the air was cool and the wind was low, only slightly rustling the grass. Sheer Mountain glanced towards the river as they padded away from it. *That's the river where I met my kits and the river where I met Owlpaw and the other Clan cats.* She thought nostalgically. *Goodbye, river. Thank you for bringing us all together.*

They padded through the wide field towards the twolegplace. "We'll probably do our best to stay out of the twolegplace." Seedclaw mewed. "We don't want to draw any unwanted attention."

"There's a path not far from my old home." Trout spoke up. "We can follow it on the outskirts. It should lead us around, but it may take a while."

"That's fine." Seedclaw assured him. "I want to travel through the park at night, last time we were chased by a dog and Berryheart got injured. So we may settle down early to get some rest so we can leave before the sun rises."

"Beyond the park is the thunderpath, right?" Earthpelt checked.

Seedclaw nodded. "That will be easier to cross at night as well."

The group of cats found the path that Trout had mentioned and began walking it. It was made of rough stones that dug into their paws, but Sheer Mountain didn't mind as much. She had extremely hardened paws from living in the mountains her whole life.

She had noticed the Clan cats developing the same kind of paws after spending so much time there. *I hope Owlpaw is right and we can make our home in the mountains. It would be so nice.* Sheer Mountain relished at the idea.

The path did go around the twolegplace, but Sheer Mountain felt as if it was taking forever to walk. "There's an abandoned twoleg barn not too far from here." Spider spoke up. "I say we rest there, get some hunting done and continue at night."

"Anyone disagree?" Seedclaw spoke up, when no cat responded they let Spider guide them to the abandoned barn. It was broken walls and chipped wood. They stepped inside and the smell was sharp with the scent of damp, rotting wood.

"Well it's not the best." Leafdawn mewed, trying to hide her disgust, but it will work for the night."

"We should get some hunting parties out." Nettle spoke up. She had quickly taken on the role of Clan deputy, even if she wasn't officially named. "Polly, Hazel, Briar and Kip. You'll make one party and we'll have Turnip, Ginger, River and Yew. The Clan cats can go hunting as well. Ant, Trout, Spider and Poppy, why don't you see if you can gather something to make some nests? If any of you have sore paws or injures go see Cocoa and Owlpaw."

Some cats like Poppy and Kip went to the medicine cats to treat their sore paws while the remainder of cats started making the barn more livable. The nest team returned and they started crafting enough nests for every cat to sleep in. The hunting parties returned with plenty of prey for the cats to share and Sheer Mountain shared hers with Nettle.

"You're already doing a great job at being deputy." Sheer Mountain purred. "I'm glad I have you."

"Thanks." Nettle waved her tail. "Who knew I'd be so good at bossing cats around." She wrinkled her nose and purred. They finished their prey and every cat with the exception of Leafdawn who agreed to sit watch for the night. Sheer Mountain cuddled up with her kits, taking note that Nettle was very close by.

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Sheer Mountain opened her sleepy eyes as Nettle prodded her in the side. "Wake up, sleepy head." Nettle mewed. "It's time to head out." Sheer Mountain lowered her head, confused as it was still completely dark outside. *Why are we up right now?* Sheer Mountain then realized she was in fact *not* in der den, but in the twoleg barn. *Right.* She rose to her paws and stretched out her limbs.

The other cats were starting to stir as well, letting out heavy yawns and looking exhausted. "I know it's early." Earthpelt mewed. "We can rest more once we get past the thunderpath. We'll take our time and get some quality rest."

They ate some more prey and took some more travelling herbs before setting out into the dark night. The wind was cold, nipping bitterly at ear tips and noses. If Sheer Mountain had to guess, it was still quite a while before dawn broke. *Hopefully we get through this park quickly.*

The cats had to veer off the stone path they had been following and into the twolegplace for a short while. Sheer Mountain had never seen a park before, but from what the Clan cats explained she realized when they had reached it. It had dark green, short grass with several strange twoleg objects scattered around. The mixed scent of twolegs, dogs, and who knows whatever else was stale. It was completely silent.

"It may be night but still be on alert." Seedclaw urged. "You never know what else could be hiding here." They crossed the soft, chilly grass and Sheer Mountain made sure to take extra care to focus on her kits. The three of them were still slowed down by sleepiness,

but they were keeping close by.

They were nearly halfway across the park when a sound was heard. It sounded strange, like an animal rustling in something. "Hold up." Seedclaw announced and the group came to a stop.

It came from some some large, dark green twoleg objects that reeked of crowfood. They watched for a while, trying to figure out if there was danger. Sheer Mountains's fur rose along her spine and she unsheathed her claws.

Seedclaw stepped forward, sniffing the area. Suddenly, a fat gray creature exploded out of the object. It had a striped tail and black markings on its face. It saw the cats and began to panic as it almost collided with Seedclaw. It lashed out with its tiny paws and Seedclaw jumped back with a hiss of pain.

In an instant, all the cats were on alert. Sheer Mountain noticed Spider and Ant going straight for the creature with claws out. The creature quickly realized it was outnumbered and ran away squealing, but not before Ant could leave some bloody claw marks in its flank. Sheer Mountain swiftly padded over to Seedclaw who already had Owlpaw and Cocoa at his side. "Are you alright?" Sheer Mountain questioned. He four thin, bleeding scratches down his cheek.

"Yeah." Seedclaw mewed. "Wretched thing, what was that?"

"Racoon." Spider explained. "I used to spend some time in this park, they aren't usually hostile. All they do is eat twoleg rubbish."

"If it was in that stuff we'll have to make sure this doesn't get infected." Owlpaw mewed and began quickly licking the wound to keep it clean. "Cocoa, get some marigold." Cocoa swiftly got some gold flowers and chewed them up, gently rubbing it into Seedclaw's cheek.

"Thanks, you two." Seedclaw purred. "It feels better already." He rose to his paws. "I'm fine now, let's keep moving." With every cat truly awake from the fright of the racoon, they continued their way through the park.

Eventually the grass came to an end and they padded through the fences. "If I remember correctly." Seedclaw mewed and lead the group to a large hole in another wooden fence. "We can get out of the twolegplace this way."

Seedclaw poked his head through, checking for any danger and turned around. "One by one, let's pass through." Seedclaw stayed back and let each cat in the large group pass through the wooden fence. When it was Sheer Mountain's turn she passed with ease, waiting on the other side for her three kits.

Once every cat was through, Sheer Mountain looked ahead of them. She could see mountains in this distance. "Those mountains" Earthpelt spoke up. "Will be your new home."

"Has any cat here crossed a thunderpath before?" Seedclaw spoke up.

"I have." Ant mewed.

"Me too." Ginger added and Spider stood up with her.

"It shouldn't be very busy right now, but we still need to show caution. Spider, you'll lead the young cats first. That's Mossie, Melon, Finch, Wren and Sparrow." Sheer Mountain had heard stories about how deadly thunderpaths were. *Please be safe my kits.* It wasn't a long walk from the twolegplace to the thunderpath, but Sheer Mountain was shocked at how large it was.

"Wait." Called Seedclaw and Sheer Mountain noticed too bright lights moving at blinding speeds towards them. In a matter of seconds, a pitch black monster tore pass, blowing the fur of the cats stronger than any wind. Fear filled Sheer Mountain's heart. *Please, mother. Father, guide my kits across safely*.

"Come with me, young ones." Spider spoke up and guided the young cats up to the thunderpath. "Do not move a muscle until I tell you." He spoke sternly. "When I say go, run as fast as you possibly can and do not stop until your paws hit gras, understand?" All the young cats agreed and Sheer Mountain watched in horror as they prepared to cross.

Spider looked to both sides of the thunderpath. There was a brief moment of silence before he opened his mouth. "Now!" At Spider's words, the five cats sprinted across the thunderpath, with Spider brining up the rear.

Sheer Mountain's heart pounded painfully in her chest, her fear not stopping util her kits were safely on the other side. "Alright," Seedclaw mewed. "Ant, you lead the next group. Take Kip, Poppy, Polly, Dew and Turnip with you."

This next group crossed safely as well, another monster had yet to appear. "Ginger, take Nettle, Sheer Mountain, Trout, Owlpaw, Leopardpaw, Fennelpaw and Slatepaw with you." Sheer Mountain grouped up with the other cats and looked at Nettle.

"Good luck." She purred. "See you on the other side." Sheer Mountain was horrified at crossing the thunderpath, but there was no sign of monsters.

"Now!" Ginger's call almost caught Sheer Mountain off guard but she quickly began sprinting as fast as her legs could carry her. Her paws thrummed against the cold, rough stone and her blood roared in her ears. She came to a clumsy stop in the grass and dropped her head, panting heavily.

Nettle stretched out her poor leg, panting as well. "That was exciting." She laughed. "And we all made it."

"Weren't we so brave, Sheer Mountain!" Finch boasted. "We ran so super fast! Like a warrior!" *I don't think they quite realize just how dangerous that was.* Sheer Mountain thought, but was relieved that it was over. The rest of the cats crossed with Seedclaw being the last.

"I'm getting too old for this." Seedclaw panted, getting checked on by Fennelpaw.

"We should rest." Sheer Mountain suggested. She could see her Clanmates tenderly licking their paws, even her paws felt raw from running so fast across the hard stone. "Our paws need treated."

"Good call." Earthpelt mewed. "Let's find some shelter and rest for

the night."

Sheer Mountain felt good finally speaking up. *I keep forgetting i'm a leader. I need to act like one.* She told herself. She worked with her Clanmates and the Clan cats to find a good base and get hunting parties out again. *The first leg of our journey is done.* Sheer Mountain thought happily and looked towards the mountains. *We'll be home soon. I just know it.*

Chapter 22

Owlpaw carefully looked over Kip's paws, sniffing them for signs in infection. "I think your infection is gone."

"Are you sure?" Kip asked, the ginger tabby sniffing his paw pads. "It still hurts."

"It will be tender, but it will heal. I'll put some more dock on it to relieve the pain." Owlpaw chewed up some dock and rubbed it gently into Kip's injured pad.

"Thanks, Owlpaw." Kip purred and limped away back to Polly and Ginger. Owlpaw glanced over at Cocoa who was treating Mossie's paw the same way.

"The infection is gone" Cocoa explained. "It will feel better soon." She urged and Mossie trotted happily away.

"You've been doing good." Owlpaw praised. "These past few days have been a little rough, but you kept pushing through."

"Thanks." Cocoa looked at Owlpaw. "I think I'm finally getting used to this whole medicine cat thing. It's been better now that we're working as a Clan." Owlpaw let out a pleasured purr and looked over the group of cats. Crossing the thunderpath had led to some unexpected consequences. Each cat had sore and torn paw pads from crossing the path, but they didn't expect them to become infected.

The worst had been Kip, Mossie, Turnip and Yew. They had all gotten pretty badly infected and had to be rapidly treated. The whole ordeal had kept them in their temporary camp for nearly four days now. They had made a home in the field, using brambles and bracken to make some poorly made dens. Though many cats toughed it out and slept outside, Berryheart and Leopardpaw had no issue doing that as MoonClan cats often slept outside.

Owlpaw was impressed by these cat's tenacity. Especially the kittypets. Melon, Polly and Cocoa had all agreed to sleep outside so the cats with infected paws could have a warm den. *They've come a long ways from sleeping comfortably with their twolegs.* As Owlpaw thought about the kittypets, Seedclaw and Sheer Mountain approached her and Cocoa.

"How are our injured cats doing?" Sheer Mountain questioned.

"Better." Owlpaw dipped her head. "Yew's infection was cleared last night and so far Mossie, Turnip and Kip have all been cleared as well. If they rest their paws tonight, we should be able to continue in the morning."

"That's wonderful news." Seedclaw purred. "Good work, both of you."

"How's your scratch?" Cocoa checked with the LichenClan tom. Owlpaw focused on Seedclaw's cheek where he had been scratched by the racoon. It was barely visibly through his dark fur.

"I barely notice it." Seedclaw reported. "Thanks to the two of you." Owlpaw could tell that Cocoa really needed the compliment. *She needs to build her confidence.* "You two should get something to eat, and get more travelling herbs if we can find some."

"Will do." Owlpaw dipped her head and looked to Sheer Mountain. "Sorry we had to stop so long."

Sheer Mountain shook her head. "It's not a problem, it's given me time to think about what's ahead."

"We're almost there." Owlpaw glanced towards the mountains. *We're almost home.* She had hardly been thinking about her troubles leaving the Clan behind as she had been so focused on healing the affected cats. *I know being a medicine cat is what I'm supposed to do.* Owlpaw reminded herself. *And it's what I will do when I get home.*

"Are you excited to get your nine lives?" Cocoa spoke up. "Owlpaw told me I'll be going with you."

"I'm...nervous." Sheer Mountain replied. "But I'll face the challenge

when it arrises." She looked to Owlpaw. "Will I be choosing Cocoa's name?"

"I'm not sure." Owlpaw admitted. "Medicine cat's work differently than warrior apprentices. It's the medicine cat who decides when their apprentice is ready to become a true medicine cat and they give them their names. It's not the leader who does it."

"I suppose we'll have to see." Sheer Mountain dipped her head towards Cocoa. "Together, right?" Cocoa nodded, her eyes sparkling with hope. *They're all coming together.* Owlpaw thought, a purr rising in her chest at the thought. *They really are becoming a Clan.* She glanced towards the mountains once again. *I know now, they'll do just fine on their own.*

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"How are all your paws feeling?" Owlpaw questioned the four cats. "Feeling good?"

"Yep!" Mossie exclaimed, sniffing her previously injured paw.

"Feels better than ever." Turnip nodded.

"Feels good." Kip mewed.

"I think I'm good to go." Yew agreed.

"Then I'll let Sheer Mountain and Seedclaw know, and we should be good to continue. Be sure to eat your travel herbs!" Owlpaw called as she padded over to the two cats. "I think we're ready."

"Good." Seedclaw purred and looked to Sheer Mountain. "They're your cats."

"Right." Sheer Mountain rose to her paws and lifted her voice. "Attention, everyone." She raised her voice. "If everyone is feeling ready and we've eaten our travelling herbs, we can get going as soon as possible."

When each cat confirmed they were ready, Seedclaw and the other Clan cats took the lead and they were finally off. Owlpaw

remembred this part of the journey, all they had was the massive field in front of them then they would reach the mountain's edge. They would have to climb the mountain back up, and then they would be in Clan territory.

They stared their journey with the cats full of energy, Owlpaw walked confidently through the field. *Last time I was here I was just a confused warrior apprentice.* She thought, she had been so frustrated with her inability to hunt, but she had truly made up for it. *I know what I'm meant to do now.*

The weather was clear, despite some slight gray skies over head but the cloud was free of and any clouds. *Tomorrow is the gathering.* Owlpaw noted, the full moon was fast approaching. *That would be the perfect time, when all four Clans are together.* She pondered how she was going to explain to the four leaders that they were brining an entire Clan of strangers into their territories. *Mosscloud please send your sign.* Owlpaw pleaded. *And make it super noticeable and obvious. There can't be any doubt.* Owlpaw glanced at Sheer Mountain who was talking closely with Nettle. *Though once StarClan gives her her nine lives, there won't be any room for doubt left.*

She glanced over the large group of cats. Throughout this journey they had worked together, they had hunted together and many of them had made sacrifices for their Clanmates. From Spider and Ant running out to defend Seedclaw, to some giving up warm dens for their injured Clanmates.

When they had been injured, those were able to hunt happily gave up first prey to the injured cats. *They've adjusted well. It may be difficult at first, but I think they'll welcome the warrior code with ease.*

Owlpaw had also caught many of them talking about StarClan, debating its existence. Some cats like Kip and Trout seemed skeptical, but others like Hazel, Spider and Ant all seemed to have an open mind. *They'll welcome StarClan soon enough, maybe when they see Mosscloud's sign.*

The journey continued, and Owlpaw could tell that the other Clan cats were eager to get home as none of them wanted to slow down. *They all miss their homes and families.* Owlpaw thought, and she did

was well but she had a different attachment to this Clan. She would be happy to be home, but sad to part from the Clan. *I know they'll do fine.* Owlpaw reminded herself. *I have my own path to follow.*

The mountains came closer and closer and the moon eventually took the spot of the sun in the sky, night had fallen and the travelling cats were exhausted. "Seedclaw," Sheer Mountain spoke up, approaching the warrior. "I know you all are eager to get home but we have to rest for the night.

Owlpaw could feel her lungs burning and she was now coughing almost every other step, her body begged her to stop. "Alright, alright." Seedclaw admitted defeat, he was clearly worn down as well. He had developed a limp, Owlpaw noticed that Nettle's limp was showing heavily as well.

While Nettle organized some hunting parties of the cats who still had some energy, the rest of them starting making nests in what little shelter they could find. Owlpaw and Cocoa treated the paws of the four cats who had infections, and though the infection had returned their poor paws had been worked raw from the walking.

With some dock and marigold at work, the four cats were the first to fall sleep. Owlpaw helped herself to some tansy to soothe her aching lungs and ate a small amount of prey. She was preparing to go to bed when she spotted Sheer Mountain staring up at the mountains. Owlpaw padded up to her to make sure she was okay, her ears twitched at the rustling of the grass as Owlpaw approached.

"So this is it." Sheer Mountain breathed out. "Beyond those mountains, is the Clans."

Owlpaw nodded and sat down beside her. "Yeah." She mewed. "We'll get there tomorrow, just in time for the gathering."

"Do you think they'll accept me?" Sheer Mountain's golden eyes were severely troubled.

"StarClan? Or the other leaders?"

"Both." Sheer Mountain's voice was quiet.

"I think they will." Owlpaw rested her tail across Sheer Mountain's flank. "This is your destiny, you'll be a wonderful leader."

"This is the last night you and I will spend together." Sheer Mountain pointed out, making Owlpaw feel incredibly sad.

"I guess it is." Owlpaw gazed solemnly at the mountains. *It's a good thing, right?*

"It's been such an honor, Owlpaw." Sheer Mountain turned to the SunClan cat. "I am so glad to have called you my friend, you have showed me an entirely new world, and gave me a place in it."

"You helped me find my confidence." Owlpaw spoke up. "You helped me to realize my true calling."

"I'm glad." Sheer Mountain touched her muzzle affectionately to Owlpaw's forehead for a moment. *She's my friend.* Owlpaw thought, her chest tightening. *She always will be, no matter what comes between us.* "But hey," Sheer Mountain rose to her paws, eyes sparkling. "It's not goodbye yet."

"You're right." Owlpaw purred and faced Sheer Mountain. *She's putting on a brave face for me, I know she's scared.* Owlpaw looked over the cats starting to fall asleep for the night, then glanced towards the mountains one last time. *I have to do the same for her.*

Chapter 23

"Rise and shine, everybody!" Seedclaw's eager voice had spread throughout the sleeping cats. Owlpaw groggily opened her eyes and lifted her head. It was morning, but it was nearly sunhigh. *How late did we sleep?* Owlpaw rose to her paws and stretched out with a heavy yawn.

"Though we Clan cats are eager to get back to our homes," Earthpelt spoke up. "Yesterday was a long trek so we figured we would let you all sleep in a bit." She purred. "But today is the day." Owlpaw could sense just how excited her mentor was to get home. "Once we reach the base of the mountains we will have to climb them and make our way back down, we will cross through LichenClan territory and by the time we reach the gathering hollow, the other four Clans should be gathering."

Excited whispers spread throughout the cluster of cats, Owlpaw willed herself to be excited as well, but this day would be bittersweet. As Sheer Mountain had pointed out, after today they would all go their separate ways. "Get your herbs and your prey and we will set out." She raised her voice

Together, Owlpaw and Cocoa gave out herbs to every cat. Once everyone was ready, just before sunhigh, they set out. Owlpaw glanced up at the sky, there were a few scattered clouds throughout the sky, but otherwise it was clear and the weather was nice. *Our last day of travel should be just fine.*

They moved through the field, sharing happy conversations. "What do you think our camp will look like?" Briar asked Hazel. "Do you think it will be big?"

"I hope so." Hazel purred. "And I can't wait to learn all the best spots to hunt!"

Owlpaw's ears twitched as she listened to another conversation. "Just think," Spider mewed, his voice eager. "A whole territory just

for us! No other cats can mess with our prey."

"And I'd like to see them try." Ginger laughed. *They're talking like a real Clan.* Owlpaw thought proudly. *I can't wait to see them grow.* Owlpaw walked beside Cocoa, she could tell the she-cat was getting increasingly more nervous.

"Are you doing alright?" Owlpaw checked.

"I think so." Cocoa mewed quietly. "Just worried, I guess." She looked at Owlpaw. "What am I going to do without you? Would I even have been able to deal with all those infected paws on my own?"

"Yes you would have." Owlpaw assured her. "Remember that medicine cats don't follow the same code that warriors do, not exactly anyway. You and I will see each other every half-moon at the Spirit Garden. You can ask myself or any of the other medicine cats for help."

"Who are the other medicine cats? What are they like?"

"I only really know from stories, but the SunClan medicine cats are Pebblestep and Honeyfrost. Pebblestep is the cat who saved my life, she is an incredible medicine cat and so is Honeyfrost. AshClan's medicine cat is Blackstorm, he's a bit ill tempered but he means well. Roseheart is LichenClan's medicine cat and Emberpaw is her apprentice. The medicine cat of MoonClan is named Oneflight, I've heard he's very kind." Owlpaw touched her tail to Cocoa's flank. "You'll fit in well with them."

"I hope so." Cocoa sighed. "I'm just worried I'll fail my new Clanmates."

"The only way you can fail them is if you give up on them." Owlpaw explained to her. "You're their medicine cat, when all seems lost know that StarClan will guide your paws."

Cocoa seemed a least a little reassured and the journey continued. At long last they reached the base of the mountains, the ground underneath their paws turned to stone and they moved up the

incline.

"It was much harder climbing up than back down." Fennelpaw noted as they reached the path that led into the Clan territories. Seedclaw stopped and turned to the large group.

"Listen up!" He raised his voice. "We'll be climbing up and down two stone paths. You all need to exercise caution and look out for each other. Take your time, this isn't a race. We don't want any cat breaking their necks." *Funny.* Owlpaw thought. *He said that last time too.*

Seedclaw went up first, with the youngest cats going in behind him. It was Owlpaw's turn and though she had done it once before, she was still a little nervous. She followed in Slatepaw's path, using various pawholds to get her up the mountain. She was glad that she had spent so much time in the mountains, it had hardened her paws.

They all gathered carefully at the top and they made decent time. Sheer Mountain was the last cat to go up which seemed fitting, she was probably the most experienced with this type of terrain, and the Clan leader. Polly was going up before her, the former kittypet was almost at the top when one of her paws gave out.

She let out a shrill cry and started slipping back down the path. Owlpaw watched in horror, beneath her Sheer Mountain stiffened her body and used it to catch Polly. The tortioishell's body trembled and her eyes were shut tight.

"You're okay, Polly." Sheer Mountain told her. "You can do this."

"No I can't." Polly whimpered. "It's too much."

"Don't you worry," Sheer Mountain promised. "I'm here with you, we'll do it together. You see that stone right there?" Polly's eyes slowly opened. "Put your paw there." Owlpaw watched as Sheer Mountain slowly helped Polly up the mountain side. *She's acting like a true leader. She even saved Polly's life, or at least saved her from an injury.*

Once Polly and Sheer Mountain reached the top, both she-cats were exhausted. "Are you okay?" Nettle asked the two of them.

"I think so." Polly mewed, turning to Sheer Mountain and looked ashamed of herself. "Sorry, Sheer Mountain. I got really freaked out."

"It's okay." Sheer Mountain purred. "We're Clanmates, we look after each other."

"Are either of you hurt?" Cocoa asked before Owlpaw had a chance.

"I scraped my paw pad pretty bad," Polly lifted her paw. "But I think it should be fine to continue."

"And I wrenched some claws, it hurts but I'll live."

"We'll use some dock for you, Polly." Cocoa mewed, taking the last of their dock and applying it to Polly's scraped pad. As for you, Sheer Mountain, I think we need comfrey root for your claw but we don't have any more right now. Are you good to continue?"

"Yes, I'm fine, Cocoa. I can continue." *Wow.* Owlpaw felt confident watching Cocoa. *She moved without thinking and didn't ask me for a single thing. She even remembered all the herbs. She really doesn't need me anymore, does she?* Owlpaw felt both saddened and overjoyed. *It's a good thing.*

Owlpaw glanced over the view, it had been so long since she had been home. She could see SunClan territory as well as the gathering hollow. The sun was setting overhead and Owlpaw swore she could see cats moving around in LichenClan territory. *We're almost there.*

Chapter 24

"So which one is going to be our territory?" Sheer Mountain stepped in beside Owlpaw as she looked over the territories. .

"That one." Owlpaw pointed with her paws towards the unclaimed territory. "That is going to be your home."

"I'm actually really excited."

"Me too." Owlpaw mewed, trying to hide the sadness she felt inside.

Once everyone had a moment to rest, they continued. "This one is a little more rocky, but we'll be going down. Just follow my lead." Seedclaw explained and slowly padded down the stone path, jumping from rock to rock until his paws safely reached LichenClan territory below.

This time went much smoother with no incidents. When they reached the bottom, was sun was almost completely set and the full moon was taking its place in the sky. "We are now in LichenClan territory." Seedclaw explained. "Fennelpaw and I's home. Watch your paws as the plant life here is incredibly thick."

"If you look over there." Earthpelt motioned with her head. "That will soon be your territory." Excited gasps and murmurs spread amongst the cats and Seedclaw led them onward. The scent of LichenClan was almost overwhelming, even Seedclaw and Fennelpaw had mostly lost their Clan scent in their time outside of their territory.

"I can smell so many cats." Melon chirped. "It's so incredible."

"You're about to see more cats than you ever thought possible." Leafdawn chuckled. "The gathering must be starting soon." As they padded through the thick forest, Owlpaw was reminded at how much she hated it the first time. She had grown used to an open field for hunting, though she did miss the sheltered trees of SunClan

territory.

In the distance, Owlpaw could hear the river. "There's a river up ahead." Seedclaw explained. "But it's easy to cross." They reached the river and the scent of cats became even stronger. Owlpaw's heart ached as she caught the scent of SunClan mixed in with the scents. *Maybe I missed home more than I thought.*

"Just use the two stones to cross." Seedclaw explained and easily jumped across, just as they had done the first time they came this way. *That feels like so long ago.* Owlpaw thought. *I was barely seven moons old.* They crossed the slow flowing river with ease and began their final approach.

"Owlpaw," Seedclaw got her attention and she walked up to the front with Sheer Mountain and the other Clan cats. "We've decided we want you to explain our mission. Tell them everything we've done and make it convincing." Owlpaw had already accepted that this would be her task, but it still felt incredibly daunting. Her heart pounded painfully in her chest. *This is it.*

Forms of cats started to come into view. "Wow!" Mossie exclaimed. "You're right, that's an *insane* amount of cats!"

"You can tell the Clans by their leaders." Fennelpaw told the young she-cat. "My leader is Timberstar, he's the pale brown tom. AshClan is lead by Riverstar, the blue-gray she-cat. MoonClan's leader is Shadowstar, a black tom and SunClan's leader is Dawnstar, a golden-brown tabby."

Owlpaw looked to Sheer Mountain whose eyes were wide with fear and panic. *We're both terrified, but we're doing this together.* "Hold on," Owlpaw heard a voice in the distance, it belonged to one of the cats in the gathering. "I smell something strange."

"Keep going." Seedclaw urged. "They'll know its us soon enough."

The voice became clearer as they neared the hollow, Owlpaw could see the leaders now. "It smells like an incredible amount of cats," Owlpaw recognized the voice of Sandfoot. "But that can't be possible."

"Wait." A she-cat spoke up, she was a brown tabby she-cat with a white tipped tail. *I think that's Larkclaw,* Owlpaw noted. *The LichenClan deputy.* "I see cats approaching," She seemed tense for a moment, then her eyes went wide. "It's Seedclaw! And Fennelpaw! Our cats have returned!"

Cheers of pure delight broke out from the crowd and they all started to swarm, the leaders at the front. "Hold on a moment." Riverstar mewed, narrowing her blue eyes as the group came just a few foxlengths away from the other Clans. "You have returned, yes." She scanned the large group. "But why have you brought so many strange cats with you? Leafdawn, what is the meaning of this?"

"Let's return to the hollow, Riverstar." Leafdawn mewed. "We will explain everything." The Clan cats eyed the strangers warily but Riverstar and the other leaders agreed.

"Sit here." Owlpaw told the group as they sat in front of the empty tree. "Sheer Mountain," she looked towards the terrified she-cat. "It's time." The leaders took their place on the stone and every cat listened intently.

Owlpaw stared up in shock at the leaders, wondering if her words would even come out. *I'm just an apprentice, about to completely change things for all four Clans.* Earthpelt gave Owlapw a reassuring nudge, and Owlpaw finally managed to speak. "I know this seems strange," Owlpaw began.

"Why is some fluffy apprentice explaining this to us?" The stern tone came from an AshClan elder, a black tom.

"If you keep your mouth shut maybe you'll find out." Slatepaw snapped.

"I see you haven't changed." The elder grumbled.

"We chose Owlpaw because we believe she will explain it the best." Seedclaw explained and motioned for Owlpaw to continue.

"When we started our journey," Owlapw mewed on. "We didn't know what we were doing, it wasn't until that we met this cat,

Sheer Mountain, that we learned what we had to do." All eyes turned to Sheer Mountain who looked half tempted to run all the way back home. "An old medicine cat came to us, her name was Mosscloud."

"Mosscloud?" Shadowstar mewed. "I haven't heard that name in so long, not since she told Crowstar about the herb that saved our Clan from sickness so many moons ago."

Owlpaw nodded slowly. "She told us the history of our Clans and what our mission was." She took a deep breath and glanced over her shoulder at the new Clan before turning back to the leaders. "Our mission was to build and bring home a fifth Clan." There was an uproar of shock and gasps from the gathering hollow.

"A fifth Clan?"

"That's impossible!"

"This can't be real?"

"Silence!" Riverstar's sharp voice raised and cut the gasps and shouting down to a murmur. "How can this be? There's always been *four* Clans."

"Not always." Owlpaw shook her head. "Mosscloud told us the story of there actually five Clans before us, ShadowClan, ThunderClan, WindClan, RiverClan and SkyClan. They disbanded countless seasons ago, but in order to keep StarClan and the warrior code alive, the distance ancestors of those Clans banded together to bring back the Clans as four new Clans, but Mosscloud told us that the Clans need a fifth to truly be complete."

"How are we supposed to believe this?" Another AshClan warrior spoke up. "Has StarClan said anything to our medicine cats?"

"They haven't," Blackstorm spoke up. "But if they were able to then these cats wouldn't have had to journey away."

They don't believe us. Owlpaw shared a panicked glance with Sheer Mountain. *Mosscloud, where's your sign?*

A sudden, ear piercing and blood chilling cry filled the air. All eyes shot up towards the unclaimed tree, in it sat a huge, pure white owl. Its feathers shimmering like stars in the moonlight. "The owl." Dawnstar breathed out. Owlpaw felt frozen, it felt as if the owl's jet black eyes were staring directly at *her*.

It gave another chilling cry before lifting its wings and flying directly towards the unclaimed territory. "That was a sign." Oneflight spoke up. "This is what they're trying to tell us. This owl led us home, and now it is leading a new Clan home."

Riverstar shook her head, clearly shaken by the sight of the owl. "We're really going to accept a band of random cats into our territories?"

"It is StarClan's will, RIverstar." Dawnstar urged. "You saw the sign, why else would they have taken our cats so far away?"

"These cats have been training so incredibly hard." Owlpaw quickly spoke up. "They've been studying the warrior code and living their lives in the wild. I've seen these cats make sacrifices and work together just as any Clan here dones. This is their home too now."

"Owlpaw has done a lot of speaking here," Shadowstar raised his voice. "And you've done a great job, but I think we need to hear from this new leader." He looked at Sheer Mountain. "Well?"

Sheer Mountain seemed shocked to speak, but quickly recovered. "When I was young, my mother would tell me stories of cats in the stars. I didn't really believe her, and my father thought she was mad. One night during a terrible storm, she was ranting about the cats in the stars and she died when the cliff gave out from under her paws.

"All this time I believe she was completely insane, until I met your Clanmates, especially Owlpaw. They showed me the way of the warrior, and Owlpaw helped me to open up my heart and mind to StarClan. It unfortunately cost me my father, but I met Mosscloud myself and I agreed to lead this Clan.

"I've been incredibly unsure about all of this, but as I've travelled

and learned with this group of cats, I know I could trust them with my life. That's the oath warriors take right? My warriors will happily take this oath, they will follow the warrior code and we will join you as a Clan. I trust in them completely."

"So do we." Berryheart stepped forward. "We all helped build this Clan, and I know they'll do great."

"These cats have protected not only each other, but us as well." Seedclaw added.

"They are true Clan cats at heart." Earthpelt mewed

"They belong here, just as we do." Leafdawn chimed in.

Much to Owlpaw's surprise, Slatepaw spoke up as well. "They're not Clanborn, no, but I know of several cats here who aren't either and they make just fine warriors."

"The stars and our Clanmates have spoken." Timberstar looked at the others, even Riverstar seemed convinced. "And I supposed we will learn, when this new leader gets to earn her nine lives."

"For now I say we lead them to their new home." Dawnstar mewed. "Timberstar, Shadowstar, you will be sharing a border with them. Perhaps you can show them where the borders are."

"I'd be happy to." Timberstar jumped down as did Shadowstar. Owlpaw noticed Leafdawn and Slatepaw now getting swarmed by their Clanmates.

"Do we have to go?" Slatepaw groaned.

"I suppose not." Leafdawn looked to Sheer Mountain. "It's your Clan now," She dipped her head. "Good luck."

"Thank you, Leafdawn." Sheer Mountain dipped her head. "And you as well Slatepaw." Slatepaw rolled his eyes and ran up to two she-cats.

Wait no! Owlpaw realized. *I'm not ready to say goodbye!* "Earthpelt." She quickly turned to her mentor. "Do we have to go back already?

Can we at least see them off."

"I suppose so." Earthpelt purred. "You should ask Dawnstar, though."

Owlpaw turned to Dawnstar, her eyes pleading. "Please, can we go with them to say goodbye and to make sure they get home okay."

Dawnstar purred with amusement. "You've been gone this long, I suppose we can wait a little longer to welcome you home. I'm glad you two are safe."

"We'd be happy to have you along." Timberstar dipped his head to the two SunClan cats. "Larkclaw, please get our Clanmates home while I show Sheer Mountain and her Clan where the border will be."

"Before you leave," Riverstar added. "All four--I mean, five leaders should meet back here once you receive your leader and Clan name. We'll all need to know what to do call you." Owlpaw was overjoyed that Riverstar had referred to Sheer Mountain as a true Clan leader. *I'm so happy.* Owlpaw thought. *Even if this is goodbye, our mission is finally complete.*

Chapter 25

Sheer Mountain stared at the territory ahead of her, casting a quick glance at the group of cats behind her. *I'm glad they're with me.* Sheer Mountain was also glad that Owlpaw and Earthpelt had decided to come as well. They were also joined by Seedclaw, Fennelpaw, Timberstar and two she-cats. One a pale ginger she-cat and a younger, bright ginger she-cat. *I believe these are Roseheart and Emberpaw, LichenClan's medicine cats.* On the side of MoonClan they had Shadowstar and his medicine cat, Oneflight as well as Berryheart and Leopardpaw.

The rest of the Clans had returned to their own territories and it was time for Sheer Mountain's Clan to claim theirs. "We won't go too far into the territory." Timberstar mewed as he lead them forward. They crossed the stream again and padded up back into LichenClan territory. "Did you see the marshland when you arrived here?"

"Briefly." Sheer Mountain replied, recalling some slightly mucky ground. "That's usually where we consider the end of our territory. Since this land has since been unclaimed, sometimes we go hunting in it, though I suppose that will have to stop now." Her purred. *They're all so kind.* It had been a rough start, but Sheer Mountain had been expecting more resistance. *I guess the will of StarClan really is that strong.*

"If that's alright with you, Sheer Mountain, we can make that our border. We will start making it more frequently."

"That sounds fine to me." The reached the marshland.

"Well go ahead." Timberstar dipped his head and stepped into LichenClan's side of the territory. "Mark your first border."

Sheer Mountain quickly marked the border, claiming her first bit of territory.

"Which one of you is the medicine cat?" Roseheart spoke up.

"Me." Cocoa stepped forward.

"We used to gather herbs here a lot, so I can tell you all the best spots to gather. If it would be alright with you, if we are running low could we ask to borrow some of your stores if you have some to spare?"

"Sure." Cocoa purred. "I'd like that."

"If you need any help, don't hesitate to ask." Roseheart dipped her head. "Oh wait! Do the two of you know how to get to the Spirit Garden?" Sheer Mountain shook her head.

"When do you plan on your receiving your nine lives?" Roseheart questioned.

"Probably tomorrow night."

"Meet me here at the border," Roseheart offered. "I will show you the way to the Spirit Garden."

"Thank you so much." Sheer Mountain felt incredibly grateful for the offer. She looked at Owlpaw. *It looks like she wanted to show me, but SunClan territory is out of the way of ours.* She could see just how sad the she-cat was, it was why she had fought so hard to come along.

"Well," Timberstar mewed. "I should be returning to my Clan. I look forward to living beside you and your Clanmates. When next we meet you will be a true leader in StarClan's eyes." The tom dipped his head.

"It's been an honor, Sheer Mountain." Seedclaw mewed. "I'm glad to have gotten to meet every single one of you."

"Thank you for your guidance." Sheer Mountain bowed her head. "You were a true asset to have in my home as well on the journey to our new home."

"Goodbye, Seedclaw." Earthpelt purred. "Goodbye, Fennelpaw."

"I'll miss you guys!" Fennelpaw called.

"Goodbye!" Owlpaw purred loudly and with Timberstar at the lead, the LichenClan vanished into the undergrowth.

"Now it's my turn to show you our border." Shadowstar spoke up and Sheer Mountain turned to him. "Follow me." They returned to the river and walked along the bank until the river split off and went up towards the mountains. "This is the end of MoonClan territory." Shadowstar explained. "We fish in this river quite a bit, I hope that won't be an issue."

"Of course not." Sheer Mountain replied hastily. "We don't fish, so take all that you need. "We can make the river our border."

"Sounds perfect." Shadowstar purred. "Now, Berryheart. You lived in that mountain camp for a short time when you were under Echoheart's rule, correct?"

"Yep." Berryheart nodded. "I could guide them there."

"That would be wonderful."

"Also," Oneflight added. "As with Roseheart, if you need any help don't hesitate to ask." He spoke directly to Cocoa. "MoonClan is always willing to help to those in need."

"Berryheart, I will leave you and Leopardpaw to guide them to their new camp." Shadowstar turned to Earthpelt and Owlpaw. "And of course, you two will be allowed access through our territory to get home."

"Thank you, Shadowstar." Earthpelt bowed her head.

"Thank you so much for your kindness." Sheer Mountain thanked the leader. "It means a lot to us."

"I am eager to see how this Clan grows. Welcome to our home." he bowed his head and with Oneflight at his side, the two of them entered MoonClan territory.

"Well," Berryheart looked to the Clan. "Let's get moving it's

incredibly late and you all have a lot of work to do." They padded through the forest, it wasn't dense like LichenClan's forest which Sheer Mountain was grateful for, and eventually the trees thinned into a small field. In the distance, Sheer Mountain spotted several outcroppings of mountain, they formed several dens.

They reached it and Sheer Mountain felt the excitement of a kit racing through her paws. There was a gentle path that led upwards to a huge outcropping. "This could be the Clan center." Earthpelt suggested. "Where all the life happens."

"You need a leader's den, a warrior's den, an apprentice den, a medicine cat den and a nursery. You'll also need an elder's den at some point, but you don't have any elders right now." Leopardpaw mewed.

"This is the den that Echoheart claimed as her own." Berryheart trotted up to a large cave in the mountain wall. Sheer Mountain stepped inside, it was incredibly spacious. "This looks like a perfect leader's den." *Right.* Sheer Mountain noted. *I'll be sleeping alone.* She had always known that her kits would outgrow her nest, but it didn't make her any more sad about it.

"Look over here!" Sheer Mountain heard the call of Spider and the group joined him. In one side of the mountain there was another cave towards the front. "Its big and spacious, it's got a hole in the top but we could cover it. This could be the warrior's den."

"I like it." Sheer Mountain purred. They continued exploring the camp, finding another rather large den next to Sheer Mountain's which they decided would be the medicine cat den. The nursery became a cave near the back corner, which would keep the kits safe from falling off the edge and finally they decided on another smaller den across camp from the warriors den to be the apprentice den. There was another spare den that could eventually become the elders den if anyone ever retired. *This would've been Tumbleweed's den.* Sheer Mountain thought sadly. *I wonder if he would've liked being a Clan cat.*

"I suppose that's it then." Berryheart mewed sadly. "We'll leave it up to you to explore and build your camp. I can't wait to see how you

all grow into an independent Clan."

Sheer Mountain looked at Owlpaw, the she-cat was staring at the floor her body trembling slightly. "Owlpaw?" Sheer Mountain stepped close. "Why don't you and I talk for a moment." Owlpaw lifted her head and the two of them padded into Sheer Mountain's new den. "Are you alright?"

"It's just..." Owlpaw's eyes were overflowing with emotion. "I'm going to miss you so much, Sheer Mountain!" Owlpaw wailed. In that moment, Sheer Mountain remembered just how young Owlpaw actually was. *She's scared.* "You've been such a good friend to me and I don't want to say goodbye."

Sheer Mountain stepped in close to Owlpaw and rested her muzzle gently on the she-cats head, calming her down. Sheer Mountain's own heart ached as well, but she would be strong for Owlpaw. "I'll miss you too. You've changed my life in such an incredible way. I don't know how I could ever thank you enough, but this isn't goodbye. We may be separated but we'll always be connected by this journey, and I will see you at gatherings as well. I'll make sure to speak to you every single time, okay?"

Owlpaw stepped back, clearly attempting to compose herself. "Okay." She took a deep, shaky breath. "I really am happy for you, even if I'm not good at showing it."

"I know, Owlpaw. Thank you so much for all your help." When Owlpaw was composed enough, she and Sheer Mountain stepped out into the open and rejoined the others. Earthpelt lovingly wrapped her tail around Owlpaw's shoulders.

"It's been a wonderful experience, Sheer Mountain." Earthpelt dipped her head. "I wish all of you luck, and I hope you're able to turn this into an incredible home."

"Thank you, Earthpelt. You've been a wonderful friend, I'm going to miss you." Sheer Mountain said, then turned to Berryheart and Leopardpaw. "You two as well, I've made such incredible friends from all four Clans and it is thanks to you that we are all here. I am so grateful you all came into my life."

"We should get going." Berryheart seemed to be quite emotional as well. "Good luck, all of you."

"Bye!" The cats of the new Clan shouted after the Clan cats as they made their way out of the camp. Sheer Mountain watched them go with a heavy heart, so many emotions racing through her mind and heart at once. All four of them vanished. She knew that Owlpaw would become an incredible medicine cat once she started, and she couldn't wait to see her again.

However, as the Clan cats vanished Sheer Mountain was left with a final thought. She looked at her Clanmates, at Nettle and her kits. There were no more Clanborn cats among them, they had all returned to their own homes. *We're officially on our own now.*

Chapter 26

"Goodbye you two!" Berryheart called as Owlpaw and Earthpelt left them at the SunClan border. They had been kind enough to escort them all the way to their border.

"Good luck being a medicine cat, Owlpaw!" Leopardpaw mewed loudly. "You'll do a great job!"

"Thank you!" Owlpaw called after her friend, her heart aching continuously. Once the two MoonClan she-cats were gone, it was just Earthpelt and Owlpaw, back in SunClan territory. It had been such a long time since Owlpaw seen the oak trees, she was genuinely happy to be home but the sadness of leaving friends behind gnawed her.

"Are you alright, Owlpaw?" Earthpelt questioned, her voice taut with concern.

"I will be." Owlpaw admitted. "It's just hard, we spent so long with those cats and now everything is going back to normal."

"It is strange." Earthpelt agreed. "It's going to be a challenge adapting to our old Clan lives, and yours will continue to change once you become a medicine cat apprentice. Aren't you excited?"

Owlpaw lifted her head slightly. "I really am." It was already past dawn by the time Owlpaw and Earthpelt reached the camp. Owlpaw breathed in the familiar scent and looked at all the familiar sights. Owlpaw was so incredibly exhausted, but she was relieved to see her home once again. They stepped into camp and Owlpaw instantly heard her name being called.

"Owlpaw!" The cry came from Blossompaw, her sisters tortoiseshell pelt slammed into hers and Owlpaw fell to the ground as her sister tackled her. Not far behind Blossompaw, Oakpaw and Rushpaw jumped on as well. Owlpaw was so overwhelmed with love by her sisters that she almost didn't notice they were crushing her. Almost.

"I missed you too!" Owlpaw purred loudly. "But I also don't like to be crushed!" Her siblings stumbled clumsily off of her and all faced her.

"Oh I'm so happy you're back! I was so worried about you! I missed you so much!" Blossompaw rambled off. "I'm just so glad you're finally home!"

"We missed you too!" Oakpaw rushed in, Owlpaw was shocked at how big her brother had gotten. He nudged her. "I'm glad you're okay!"

Rushpaw who was usually the most composed of the four kits was even overly excited. "Welcome home, Owlpaw!" Rushpaw nuzzled her so hard that she was almost knocked over.

"Let me see my kit!" Owlpaw heard Briarrose's voice through the crowd and the small she-cat pushed her way through her other kits and stared at Owlpaw in shock until her eyes overflowed with love. She swarmed Owlpaw and began nuzzling her all over. "Oh, Owlpaw! My sweet, Owlpaw!" She wailed with pure happiness. "I'm so sorry I doubted you," Briarrose mewed, stepping back. "The guilt has been eating at me this whole time, I'm so *proud* of you, Owlpaw."

Owlpaw was shocked to hear such words from her mother. "Thank you." Owlpaw pressed her muzzle to her mother's. "I needed to hear that."

"I'm proud of you too." Owlpaw felt a fluffy tail on her shoulders as Yarrowtail stepped up as well. "You've done something incredible, Owlpaw. And you've gotten bigger!" *Have I?* Owlpaw had noticed her siblings were bigger, but she still felt about the same size around them as when she left. *I guess that means I grew too.*

"Welcome home, sister." Mudfall stepped through the crowd to greet Earthpelt. "I'm glad to see you home."

"I'm glad to be home." Earthpelt nuzzled her brother.

"There's some cats I want you to meet." Mudfall purred loudly.

"What are you talking about?"

"While you were gone..." Mudfall mewed slyly. "Dovepool gave birth to my kits."

"You're kidding!" Earthpelt's eyes went wide, and with all the energy of an apprentice, Earthpelt sprinted over to the nursery.

"Dovepool had kits?" Owlpaw looked at her sister in confusion.

Blossompaw nodded eagerly. "Sedgefern too." *Wow. I missed so much.*

"I know you're all excited to see Owlpaw," Dawnstar spoke up. "And I'm sure she has many stories to tell, but I don't think she's slept." Owlpaw was reminded of her own exhaustion, she had forgotten it during all the chaos. "When Owlpaw wakes, we can ask her every question we want."

Owlpaw looked gratefully at her leader and turned to Blososmpaw. "I'll be honest," Blossompaw admitted. "I haven't slept yet either, none of us have. We were all just so eager for you to return. I wanted to rush you at the gathering but you were busy."

"You looked so mature explaining all that stuff to the leaders." Rushpaw pointed out.

"So it's true?" Oakpaw mewed. "There's really a fifth Clan now?"

"Like Dawnstar said," Owlpaw flicked her tail over Oakpaw's ears. "I need sleep before I answer any questions.

"Right." Oakpaw mewed sheepishly. Together, the four siblings padded to the apprentice den. Owlpaw fell into a nest, and with her siblings curled up protectively around her, she fell into an easy slumber.

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Owlpaw opened her eyes to find that she was alone in the apprentice den, she had half expected to be back in Sheer Mountain's camp, she had to remind herself that she was now home

in SunClan. Her siblings had all woken up and left their nests, all that remaind was Owlpaw. She stepped out into the Clan to find that it was a little past sunhigh. She hadn't slept long, but she felt a lot better.

"You're awake!" Oakpaw mewed from where he sat with Burnclaw. "Sleep well?"

"I did." Owlpaw explained, her eyes moving to the medicine cat den where Pebblestep and Honeyfrost were.

"Now can you tell me all about your journey?" Oakpaw pleaded. "I've been dying to know."

"Soon." Owlpaw promised. "But there's something I have to do." She noticed Earthpelt as well emerging from the warrior's den after a nap. She met her current mentor's gaze and Earthpelt gave her a nod. Owlpaw nervously approached the medicine cat den.

"Greetings, Owlpaw." Pebblestep mewed when she saw her. "I'm glad to see you all back in one piece, with a whole new Clan at that!"

"Me too." Owlpaw shuffled her paws.

"How did the herb training find you? Were there any serious injuries?"

"Yeah, actually." Owlpaw cleared her throat as she started to explain. "First, Berryheart got wounded when we ran away from a dog and I used what you taught me to treat her. Then Leafdawn was injured pretty badly by some rouges and I treated that too. Then I met this rouge named Nettle, she's one of the new Clan members, the deputy actually, she got hurt really bad but the same rouge and she almost died and so did I but she saved me and I did everything I could to treat her wounds and I did! She still has a limp, but--"

"Wait--" Honeyfrost cut her off. "You did all that? That's impressive for how little training you had."

"That's actually what I wanted to talk to you about." Owlpaw

mewed, realizing he had been rambling. "I've never been good at hunting or fighting, but when I was treating those around me I realized something. My destiny is not that of a warrior, but that of a medicine cat and I know there's already two medicine cats but I was hoping I could become your apprentice." Owlpaw bowed her head.

"I had hoped you would follow this path." Pebblestep purred loudly. "That's why I taught you herbs in the first place. I saw you struggling with your warrior training so I taught you some herbs, it worked out better than I ever could've hoped."

Owlpaw lifted her head, her heart jumping for joy. "So you'll take me on as your apprentice."

"I won't be taking you as my apprentice," Pebblestep mewed, causing Owlpaw's heart to drop for a moment. "Honeyfrost will." Honeyfrost looked at her mentor in shock.

"Me?"

"Yes," Pebblestep purred. "I've already trained an apprentice, it's *your* turn to train someone, Honeyfrost. I'll give you my guidance, but Owlpaw's training will be in your paws."

Honeyfrost and Owlpaw looked at each other, Owlpaw knew that Honeyfrost would be an incredible mentor to her. "I'll be happy to, Owlpaw." Honeyfrost dipped her head.

"Now we have to tell Dawnstar." Pebblestep looked at Owlpaw. "Does Earthpelt know?"

Owlpaw nodded. "We talked about this a while ago."

"Good." Pebblestep mewed and began guiding the other two to Dawnstar's den. They stepped inside and Owlpaw faced her leader.

"Well hello there," Dawnstar greeted. "Did you need something."

"I want to become a medicine cat apprentice." Owlpaw blurted. "Honeyfrost agreed to take me on as her apprentice."

Dawnstar blinked, clearly taken aback by the sudden request. "Well,

I guess this isn't unexpected." Dawnstar purred. "And I'm glad you have found the path you wish to follow. Does Earthpelt know?" Owlpaw nodded. "Then we won't hesitate."

All of them stepped of the Dawnstar's den, the and the leader made her way to the SunStone. "Whats going on?" Blossompaw asked from behind Owlpaw.

"I'm becoming a medicine cat apprentice." Owlpaw explained.

Blossompaw's eyes went wide. "I didn't even know you wanted to be a medicine cat apprentice."

"Neither did I until the journey, but this is where I truly belong."

"Then I'm happy for you." Blossompaw purred, touching her muzzle to Owlpaw's cheek. "I missed you so much." She whimpered under her breath. Owlpaw could see that Blossompaw was incredibly emotional. *What else happened while I was gone?*

"Let all cats old enough to gather their own prey join beneath the SunStone for a Clan meeting!" Dawnstar's voice rang out through the hollow, getting the attention of all the Clan cats. Owlpaw sat eagerly in the center, with Blossompaw not far behind her. "As you all know," Dawnstar began once the Clan had gathered. "Our beloved Owlpaw and Earthpelt returned to his, and with it it seems Owlpaw's path has changed. For she no longer wishes to follow the path of a hunter and fighter, but the path of a healer instead."

Her Clanmates looked at her in surprise, but Owlpaw felt confident in her choice. "Because of this, Owlpaw will need to receive a new mentor. Owlpaw, you are now following the path of a medicine cat and your new mentor shall be Honeyfrost. Honeyfrost is an incredibly skilled and compassionate medicine cat and I know she will teach you just as Pebblestep taught her." Owlpaw faced Honeyfrost, touching her muzzle to her brand new mentor's, sealing their bond as mentor and apprentice.

"Owlpaw! Owlpaw!" Her Clanmates cheered for her and Owlpaw noticed Earthpelt watching from the sides. Owlpaw approached her old mentor and faced her. As Earthpelt opened her mouth to speak,

Owlpaw got overwhelmed with emotion and pressed herself against the brown and white she-cat.

"Thank you so much, Earthpelt, for everything you've done. Thank you for believing in me, and encouraging me this whole time. I couldn't have gotten this far without you."

"Of course, Owlpaw." Earthpelt purred loudly. "I'm sad that you're no longer my apprentice, but never forget that I was always your first mentor. If you ever need something, don't hesitate to ask."

"Thank you." Owlpaw purred and stepped back, taking a deep breath. *Sheer Mountain's Clan is in their new home. Tonight she will receive her nine lives, and I'm finally a medicine cat apprentice. This is the way our lives are meant to be.*

Chapter 27

"Spider, make sure that hole is sealed nice and tight. We don't want any rain leaking in." Sheer Mountain commanded. "And Ginger, Flick and Poppy, keep gathering moss. We have a lot of nests to make. These are going to be permanent so work hard on them." Sheer Mountain had found it natural to start guiding her Clanmates with the help of Nettle.

They had made some poor makeshift nests after the Clan cats had left to get some sleep, but now that they were well rested, the real work began. She had some cats getting the dens situation, other gathering materials as well as hunting parties and the first border patrols.

They had been hard at work all day, and as the sun started to set, Sheer Mountain knew what awaited her. *I can't put this off any longer.* "Nettle," Sheer Mountain called to her deputy. "You have this under control right?"

"Is it time?" Nettle asked nervously.

"I think so." Sheer Mountain sighed, trying to hide her fear.

"You'll do great." Nettle assured her and Sheer Mountain looked for Cocoa. The brown she-cat had been working hard to gather herbs and keep her store well stocked. Sheer Mountain stepped into her den.

"Are you ready?" Cocoa jumped slightly and spun around.

"Y-yeah." She took a breath. You can't eat before this right? Not even herbs."

"That's what Earthpelt said." Sheer Mountain replied. "We better get going." After some good luck calls from her Clanmates, Sheer Mountain and Cocoa set out into their territory, going towards the LichenClan border.

Sheer Mountain barely knew their territory, but she hoped that in time she would be able to know it as well as she knew her old home. "What do you think is going to happen?" Cocoa questioned. "Did they explain it to you?"

Sheer Mountain shook her head. "They don't know how it works, none of them are leaders. It's something I'll be doing without any insight unfortunately, but they promised StarClan would guide me."

"They sure put a lot of faith in StarClan." Cocoa pointed out.

"StarClan got us this far." Sheer Mountain countered. "Surely they'll us even farther." They padded along the river bank until Sheer Mountain spotted Roseheart sitting near the border.

"There you are." Roseheart called kindly.

"Sorry," Sheer Mountain dipped her head. "Still getting used to the territory."

"It's alright." Roseheart assured them. "The Spirit Garden is this way." Sheer Mountain and Cocoa followed behind Roseheart towards the mountains in between AshClan and LichenClan territory.

"So is there anything special we need to do?" Sheer Mountain questioned. "Have you ever done this?"

"I watched Timberstar earn his nine lives." Roseheart replied. "When you get to the Spirit Garden, lie down and close your eyes. StarClan will do the rest. Just remember that whatever you see and whatever StarClan tells you, you cannot share with any other cat."

"Really?" Sheer Mountain questioned in disbelief.

Roseheart nodded. "Unless StarClan gives you permission, it must stay between you and the stars." *This must be really serious.* Sheer Mountain thought. They reached the base of a narrow path that twisted up towards the mountains, it followed the river up towards the higher mountains. "Follow this path." Roseheart instructed. "There's a cavern at the top, go inside of it and you will find the Spirit Garden. Good luck and may StarClan light your path."

Roseheart dipped her head and began returning to her own territory.

Sheer Mountain stared up the path, her heart beating rapidly in her chest. *This is really it.* She glanced at Cocoa who looked equally terrified. "Ready?"

Cocoa hesitated for a brief moment before letting out a deep breath. "I'm ready." Side by side, Sheer Mountain and Cocoa walked up the path, it was a long walk but they eventually reached the top. Sheer Mountain could see the entire territories from here. She glanced towards SunClan territory. *I hope Owlpaw is a medicine cat apprentice now.* She thought before stepping into the cavern in front of them.

It was dark, but it was oddly warm. The smooth stone felt natural beneath Sheer Mountain's paws and she could scent flowers. Eventually the tunnel opened up and what Sheer Mountain saw took her breath away. The entire cavern was filled with beautiful, healthy flowers and plant life. In the center, however, was a large flower. It was beautiful and shaped like a star. *So this is it.*

Sheer Mountain felt more than just Cocoa beside her, it felt as if several cats were with her in his cavern. Sheer Mountain stared at the flower and curled up, tucking her legs underneath her chest. Beside her, Cocoa did the same. *Alright.* Sheer Mountain lowered her head and closed her eyes. *I'm ready, StarClan.*

Sheer Mountain felt sleep take over her body, but something was strange. The scent of flowers faded and the warmth of the cave vanished. Sheer Mountain could feel all of the warmth inside of her body seeping away, leaving her cold. Sheer Mountain attempted to move but couldn't. Her body was stiff, and she realized with a shock that she couldn't even feel her own heart beating. *Am I dead?* She thought with a panic.

She did her best to move, but Sheer Mountain felt completely hopeless. At long last, warmth started to flow back into her. Her eyes finally fluttered open and she realized she was no longer in the Spirit Garden, but back at the gathering hollow. "Sheer Mountain!" Cocoa exclaimed. "I was so scared, you-you were dead! Or at least I thought you were."

"That's certainly what it felt like." Sheer Mountain rose to her paws and looked around. *Shouldn't there be cats here?* "Is something wrong? Did I mess it up?"

"Sheer Mountain," Cocoa spoke, her voice trembling. *Look.* Sheer Mountain realized that Cocoa was staring up at the starry sky. Sheer Mountain watched in shock as the stars began to move, swirling down in front of the two cats and taking the shape of cats. Sheer Mountain realized with a start that two of them were Star and Tumbleweed, Sheer Mountain wanted to run to her parents like a kit, but something held her back. She also recognized Mosscloud. *So she was able to follow us.* The others though, Sheer Mountain didn't know.

"Welcome, Sheer Mountain." All nine cats spoke, but it felt as if countless voices were speaking in her head. Sheer Mountain noticed Cocoa taking a step back. "Your life has been stripped away so that you may receive nine more." *So I did die.* "Are you ready?"

Sheer Mountain wasn't sure if she could back out at this point, and despite her fears, she knew she was. "I am."

"Then let's begin."

The first cat to step froward was a lean she-cat with brilliant golden fur, covered with shimmering stars. She approached Sheer Mountain with hopeful, gentle green eyes. "Greetings, Sheer Mountain. My name is Sunstar, the first leader of SunClan. I am honored to give you your first life." She dipped her head. "With this life, I give you loyalty. Never forget where your loyalty lies, to the cats who sacrificed so much for you. Give them loyalty, and they will give you loyalty in return."

Sunstar touched her muzzle to Sheer Mountain's forehead and the blinding pain that followed almost knocked Sheer Mountain to the ground. She felt the hurt of betrayal, so deep in her heart that she let out a gasp. The pain slowly ebbed away and Sunstar stepped back and Sheer Mountain felt as if she had just fallen off a cliff. "What was that? That hurt so much!"

"Not all lives will feel the same, young leader." Sunstar dipped her

head and returned to the line of cats. *I have to do that nine more times?*

The next cat to approach was a muscular gray tabby tom with burning amber eyes. "My name is Ashstar, founding her AshClan. With this life I give you pride. Use it to find pride in yourself, in the incredible feat you have done, as well as pride in your Clanmates who have made this journey and will continue to fight with you."

Ashstar touched his muzzle to Sheer Mountain's forehead and she braced herself for another bolt of pain. She was surprised to find something different. This life hurt, but it wasn't the same. It was burning deep inside of her, the burning of fear and pride, the pride she felt for those closest to her. Ashstar stepped back and dipped his head before returning to the line of cats.

Next was a beautiful, pure white she-cat with round blue eyes. "My name is Moonstar, founder of MoonClan." She purred, her voice smooth as down. "With this life I give you peace. I know fighting my often seem like that answer, but there is also time to consider more peaceful options to keep your Clan safe and healthy. Claws are not always the answer."

Moonstar's life hit Sheer Mountain like a wave, she felt the itch to fight, a desire to get revenge similar to when she had seen Nettle for the first time after Raptor's attack. Eventually the pain faded, and Sheer Mountain was left with a calm feeling in her chest. Moonstar returned and a large, fluffy brown she-cat took her place.

"I am Lichenstar, first leader of LichenClan." She seemed the oldest of them all, the wisest. "With this life, I give you strength. Not just strength of the body, but the heart and mind as well. Use this strength to guide your Clan, even when you feel as if you cannot fight any longer."

Lichenstar's life filled Sheer Mountain with an overwhelming sense of fear, the fear she had been feeling for so long leading up to this moment. The feeling was soon overtaken with a rush of strength, energy and courage. Lichenstar gave her an approving nod and the next cat to show up looked odd.

He was a gray tom, but Sheer Mountain could see through his pelt, as if he was fading away. "My name is Skystorm, I am a descendant of SkyClan, one of your direct ancestors." Sheer Mountain's eyes went wide. "I have held on for so long for this moment, and I am glad I was able to give you one of your nine lives, new leader. With this life I give you dedication, use it to dedicate your heart and soul to everything that you do for your Clan."

Skystorm's life felt like a rush of pure energy, Sheer Mountain felt as if she could run around the entire mountain range and back, it left her wanting more, but feeling so incredibly fulfilled. "Good luck, young leader." He stepped back and a lean, wiry she-cat took his place, her pelt was also fading.

"Greetings," She spoke with a strange accent, a voice that Sheer Mountain had never heard before. "My name is Cloud that Covers The Moon, though you can just call me Cloud." *What a strange name.* "I am a descendant of the Tribe of Rushing Water, and Skystorm's mate. I held on with him this entire time, because I knew that one day his dream of seeing SkyClan's blood live on would come true. That's why, with this live I give you love. You know the love a mother has for her kits, even if they are not yours. So use this live to give that same love to all of your Clanmates, for they are all your family now."

Sheer Mountain was expecting a life for love to be soothing, but instead it rocked her entire body, leaving her breathless. She felt all the love she had felt towards Finch, Wren and Sparrow thrown back at her. The fear she had felt for them, the pure love she had felt. It faded eventually, but left Sheer Mountain shaking. "Love is a powerful force, Sheer Mountain. Never forget that." She returned to the line and Sheer Mountain watched as her father was next.

"Father." Sheer Mountain whimpered. "I'm so happy to see you. I've missed you so much--"

Tumbleweed lifted his tail, quieting her. "There will be time for all that later, my daughter." He purred. "But I miss you too." He looked around. "Now all this is rather new to me, but I am so thrilled to be back with your mother. Even if she did give me an earful for not believing her about all this StarClan stuff." He laughed and Sheer

Mountain purred along with him. "Now all this stuff seems pretty intense, and I don't really know what I'm doing but, with this life I give you humor. Even with all this crazy stuff going on, never forget to laugh."

Sheer Mountain closed her eyes and accepted her father's gift. This one flowed in like warmth, reminding Sheer Mountain of her life growing up. When she was scared or sad, Tumbleweed always knew what to say to make her laugh. "Thank you." Sheer Mountain whispered as Tumbleweed stepped back.

"Remember now," Tumbleweed mewed. "Now we're *always* together, Pebble. No matter what happens." Tumbleweed returned to the line of cats and next up was Star.

"Oh my precious daughter." Star mewed. "I never thought I would see this, but I am so unbelievably proud of you. You've done something incredible, and I know you will lead this Clan well." Sheer Mountain was so grateful for her mother's words. "With this life I give you faith, may you never lose your faith in the stars that guided you here, the Clanmates who made the journey with you, and most importantly, never lose faith in yourself."

Star's life filled her with doubt, crushing doubt in herself, thinking she wasn't good enough. But as it ebbed away, Sheer Mountain felt the faith that her mother was talking about. "I miss you." Sheer Mountain whimpered before Star left.

"I miss you too, but like your father said." She rasped her tongue over Sheer Mountain's forehead. "We're always together now."

The final cat was Mosscloud, the cat who had started this mission would be the one to close it. Mosscloud faced Sheer Mountain, her eyes shimmering. "Sheer Mountain I can't thank you enough. Your sacrifice and this mission have finally allowed me to come home. I have lived so long trapped away from my loved ones, and to finally be reunited with them is everything I've ever dreamed of." Sheer Mountain could sense the pure happiness and joy in Mosscloud's tone. "This this life I give you patience, keep it close and know that if you have the heart and energy to wait, what you want most will come to you."

Mosscloud's life filled her with anxiety, pain and loss. All the emotions Mosscloud must have felt for so long, rushing in all at once. Eventually, Sheer Mountain was filled with the feeling of satisfaction. *I have nine lives now.* Sheer Mountain opened her eyes and faced Mosscloud.

The medicine cat raised her voice. *This is it.* "I hail you by your new name, Mountainstar. Your old life is no more. You have now received the nine lives of a leader and I grant you guardianship of your brand new Clan, MountainClan. Defend it well; care for young and old; honor your ancestors and the traditions of the warrior code; live each life with pride and dignity."

"Mountainstar! Mountainstar!" The Clans cheered her new name. *Mountainstar.* She thought about it, she had been Sheer Mountain for her whole life, but something about this new name felt...perfect. *Mountainstar. Leader of MountainClan.* Mountainstar faced the cats of StarClan, watching them all slowly fade away except for Mosscloud.

"There is one more thing I must do before you return home, Mountainstar."

"What's that?"

Mosscloud's eyes drifted back to Cocoa, the she-cat had seen the entire thing and looked on in awe. "Usually, a medicine cat gives this ceremony to their apprentice, but I will be doing it for you tonight."

"What do I have to do?" Cocoa questioned. "Because that looked painful."

"Don't worry." Mosscloud purred. "This is painless. Are you ready?"

Cocoa nodded shakily.

"I, Mosscloud, medicine cat of StarClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this kittypet. She has not been trained for long, but with your guidance she will serve her Clan for many moons to come." Mountainstar listened intently to the words, it was

very similar to the way Earthpelt had explained the warrior ceremony.

"Cocoa, do you promise to uphold the ways of a medicine cat, to stand apart from rivalry between Clan and Clan and to protect all cats equally, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do." Cocoa's voice was shaky, but Mountainstar couldn't deny that she was truly ready.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your true name as a medicine cat. Cocoa, from this day forward you will be named Mothflower, after the moth that brought Owlpaw to you. StarClan welcomes you as the very first medicine cat of MountainClan."

The newly named Mothflower stepped forward, she had remembered what the Clan cats had explained to her. She licked Mosscloud's shoulder and Mosscloud rested her muzzle on Mothflower's head.

"Mothflower! Mothflower!" It was just Mountainstar and Mosscloud, but both of them happily cheered the new medicine cat.

"The two of you are now to return to your Clan," Mosscloud continued. "Bestow warrior names onto your Clanmates, and start your lives as Clan cats." Mosscloud slowly faded and when Mountainstar opened her eyes, she was back in the Spirit Garden with Mothflower at her side.

"That was..." Mountainstar breathed out.

"Incredible." Mothflower finished. "We are true Clan cats now, you have nine lives and I am a medicine cat in the eyes of StarClan."

"We really are. Mountainstar reflected for a moment on how far they had come, she knew she had a long road ahead of her but the hard part was over now. "Come on." Mountainstar mewed to her medicine cat. "Let's go home."

Chapter 28

Mountainstar and Mothflower left the Spirit Garden together, padding up the small stone path and into the fresh-air. Mountainstar breathed in the chilly air. She could see the sun slowly starting to rise up in the dark sky. "It will probably be morning by the time we get home." Mountainstar mewed. "Are you ready?"

"Yeah." Mothflower nodded slowly. "This is all so strange." She mewed quietly as they started to pad down the mountain side. "My name has been Cocoa for so long, and now it's different."

"Same here." Mountainstar agreed, still trying to adjust to the fact that her name had changed. "But even as weird as it feels," She lifted her head. "It feels right."

"I suppose." Mothflower's voice was low. *She clearly doesn't feel the same.* Mountainstar realized. *She may just need more time.* They two of them walked side by side along the riverbank in LichenClan's territory.

Mountainstar's stomach growled fiercely with hunger, but she knew that she was not allowed to hunt on this land. *That's another thing I have to get used to.* She told herself. *But I need to learn how to live within my own territory.*

At long last, with Mountainstar feeling both physically and mentally exhausted they reached their own territory. *There's so much I need to do before I can rest.* Mountainstar noted. *I need to give all my warriors their true warrior names, I need to make Nettle my deputy and I need to make all the young cats apprentices.*

Mountainstar had so many responsibilities now, she wasn't sure if she would be able to handle them all. *Plus there's the gathering tomorrow night where I have to tell the other leaders that I'm a true leader now.* Her mind was buzzing, and all she wanted to do was sleep and eat.

Mountainstar and Mothflower finally reached their camp and Mountainstar breathed a sigh of relief. "I'm glad we're back."

"What happens now?" Mothflower questioned.

"First I need to give everyone names." Mountainstar replied. "And I need to hold an official ceremony for Nettle to become my deputy."

"Do you remember how to do all that?"

"I think so." Mountainstar nodded. She had gone over the various ceremonies she would have to perform as a leader many times with the Clan cats. *I can't screw this up now.* Mountainstar stepped into her camp, walking up the path. She saw her Clan busy at work, making nests and sharing prey. *They already look like they're at home.* They all saw her, clearly waiting eagerly.

"Sheer Mountain!" Wren called, running up with her brothers following close by. "You're back! Did it work."

"It did." Mountainstar purred. "But I'm not Sheer Mountain anymore." She looked towards the small outlook that hung over her den, they had decided on it being the Clan gathering spot which they uncreatively named The Overlook. "I need to do something." She climbed the small jagged path up to the Overlook and glanced over her Clanmates. *This is the first of many times I will be up here.* "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Overlook for a Clan meeting!" Her call rang out through the mountains, those words felt right. *This is my place as leader.* Most of the Clan had already gathered, and once everyone was in attendance, Mountainstar knew she could begin.

"I want to start by telling you all the the ceremony was a success. I met with StarClan and they gave me nine lives. They gave me the name Mountainstar, and we are now MountainClan." Happy murmurs spread through the group.

"MountainClan sounds so cool!" Spider gushed to Ginger who nodded in agreement.

"Our medicine cat also had a ceremony, Mosccloud made her a true

medicine cat and gave her the name Mothflower." Mothflower ducked her head sheepishly as her Clanmates cheered her on. "But now, the rest of you need Clan names as well. I'm not going to hold the exact ceremony for all of you, but you all still must take the oath." She cleared her throat. "Cats of MountainClan, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and defend the Clan, even at the cost of your lives?"

"I do." Their voices, all confident and prideful, rang out in unison. Mountainstar jumped down from the Overlook to face her Clanmates. She remembered the names that some had suggested to her, but she had to come up with others. "Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names."

She faced Spider first, the black tom held his head high. "Spiderstorm," *The rouges and loners will be easy.* She continued down the line. "Troutstream, Turnipclaw, Briarfall, Hazelspring, Riverstep, Gingersky, Dewleaf, Yewtail, Antwhisker, Poppysong," Her eyes rested on Nettle, Nettle hadn't suggested a name to her, but had instead told Mountainstar to listen to what her heart said. "Nettleheart." Next were the cats with names that were harder to decide, but she was still confident in her choices. She looked at Kip who faced Mountainstar eagerly. "Fireclaw," She turned to Polly. "Sorrelfern," and lastly, at Flick. "And finally, Flintfoot."

The Clans cheered together, welcoming their new name. "There is two more ceremonies I must preform, the first being for our first deputy." She looked at Nettleheart who faced Mountainstar confidently. "I say these words before the spirits of StarClan, so they may hear and approve my choice. Nettleheart will be the first deputy of MountainClan!"

"Thank you for this, Mountainstar." Nettleheart bowed her head. "I won't let any of you down."

"I know you won't." Mountainstar purred.

"Nettleheart! Nettleheart!"

"And finally," Mountainstar looked to the young cats eagerly awaiting their own ceremony. Only Melon had requested a specific

name change. "We have five cats who will become Clan apprentices. It is time for their ceremony. From this day forward, until you have all earned your warrior names, you will be known as: Wrenpaw, Finchpaw, Sparrowpaw, Petalpaw and Mossypaw." They all hoped around in pure excitement. "Wrenpaw, Nettleheart needs an apprentice as deputy so she will become your mentor."

Wrenpaw skipped forward, touching her muzzle to Nettleheart's. *I trust her to teach Wrenpaw well.* "Finchpaw, your mentor will be Spiderstorm. Sparrowpaw, your mentor will be Dewleaf, Petalpaw your mentor will be Antwhisker and finally, Mossypaw your mentor will be Fireclaw."

All apprentices touched noses with their new mentors. "Wrenpaw! Finchpaw! Sparrowpaw! Mossypaw! Petalpaw!" The Clan cheered their first batch of apprentices. Mountainstar looked over her three kits. *They're growing up, soon I will be making them warriors. I know they'll do me so proud.*

"Cats of MountainClan!" Mountainstar raised her voice. "We are loners, kittypets and rouges no longer. For now we are a true Clan under the watch of StarClan! We fight together, we hunt together and we protect each other. This is our home and we must defend it, and make it our own. Together, we are not several single cats, we are one! We. Are. MountainClan!"

Cheers of pure joy and energy rang out, Mountainstar could feel her own pride burning as hot as a flame inside of her chest. *Is that Ashstar's life at work?* She cheered with her Clanmates, their own energy fueling her own. *We did it. We really did it.* Mountainstar was a Clan leader, and this was her Clan. *I will give all nine lives to keep this Clan safe, no matter what.*

The Clan meeting finally died down and Mountainstar watched as all the apprentices scurried off with their mentors, eager to get started with their training. She felt bittersweet watching her kits run off, they wouldn't be sharing a den anymore. They would grow up and become strong, independant cats. She noticed Finchpaw talking excitedly with Mossypaw. *Some day they'll have kits of their own, they will help to grow MountainClan.*

"That was a great speech." Nettleheart mewed, limping up to Mountainstar. She sat down beside her. "Nine lives later and suddenly you're a true leader. You picked good names too."

"Do you like yours?" Mountainstar questioned anxiously.

"I love it." Nettleheart purred. "I think it suits me well. I'm excited to train Wrenpaw, she's such a clever cat. I'm sure she will learn quickly."

"We have so much to learn as well." Mountainstar pointed out. "Our lives as Clan cats is only just beginning. Leaf-bare isn't far off and we have to be ready for it."

"Don't worry about it." Nettleheart nudged her. "StarClan wouldn't have made us a Clan if they didn't think we were ready for it."

"Nettleheart?" Mountainstar looked at her deputy. "Do you believe in StarClan?"

"I'm not sure honestly," Nettleheart admitted. "But you do, and that's enough for me. It's all confusing but supposedly you have nine lives now and that's pretty incredible." She rose to her paws. "As long as you believe in StarClan, so will I."

Mountainstar's heart skipped a beat at the glimmer in Nettleheart's eyes. *She's incredible. I'm so glad I chose her as my deputy.* "Now you should get some rest." Nettleheart purred. "I need to get Wrenpaw out training.

Right. Mountainstar had forgotten just how exhausted she really was. She picked up a piece of prey and began padding towards her den, which now had a newly made den in it. She turned to look out as her Clanmates began their lives as warriors. *This is my home now. This is my life.* She breathed a sigh, feeling happiness wash over her. *I can't wait to get started.*

Chapter 29

"Can we go home yet?" Blossompaw pleaded with Mudfall, her paws itching to get back into camp.

"I seem to recall not long ago a she-cat who couldn't get enough training, too much if it fact." Mudfall looked at her skeptically.

"I know, I know." Blossompaw sighed. "But I want to spend some time with Owlpaw, it's been so long since I saw her and I haven't gotten to spend any quality time with her yet! Everyone was telling me that breaks were important, right?"

Mudfall chuckled. "Very well, Blossompaw." He purred. "You can spend some time with Owlpaw, if she's not busy that is. Medicine cats live very busy lives."

"I know." Blossompaw mewled impatiently. "Can we go now please?" Mudfall let out a laugh, but began leading Blossompaw back to camp. It had been two days since Owlpaw's return and Blossompaw had been dying to spend some time with her.

Her confinement to camp had ended the day before Owlpaw returned and while it felt good to be back in training, she wanted nothing more than to spend some time with Owlpaw. Blossompaw hadn't been expecting Owlpaw to switch her training over to being a medicine cat and Blossompaw had honestly been a little sad about it.

It meant that Owlpaw wouldn't be training with them anymore, she wouldn't even be sharing a den with Blossompaw and their brothers. *I haven't gotten to spend a lot of time with her yet.* Blossompaw thought. *But she seems so different.* Blossompaw had tried wrapping her head around just what Owlpaw and the other travelling cats had done.

They had created and entirely new Clan! There was a fifth Clan in the mountains and Blossompaw wasn't sure how to feel about it.

She didn't know why StarClan deemed it necessary to have a fifth when the four were doing just fine on their own. However, Owlpaw seemed passionate about it so Blossompaw held her tongue. She would just have to allow this new Clan time to settle in, though she was eager to see how they worked. They didn't even have a name yet!

Blossompaw and Mudfall finally reached camp and Blossompaw spotted her sitting sitting outside of the medicine cat den eating a mouse. *Yes!* Blossompaw felt excitement rush through her paws. *She's not busy!* Blossompaw happily trotted over to her sister. "Are you busy?" She checked.

"Not really." Owlpaw mewed, swallowing her bite. "What's up?"

"Nothing much." Blossompaw sat down beside her sister. "I just wanted to talk to you, you were gone for so long, we need to catch up. I'm sure you have a lot of stories to tell!"

"I'm sure you do too." Owlpaw purred. "It seemed like a lot has changed. There wasn't a nursery full of kits for starters, and Bluestream and the others were still apprentices!"

"Yeah," Blossompaw shrugged. "But that's typical Clan life. I *did* help Sedgefern give birth though, which was really cool to see."

"That sounds incredible." Owlpaw purred. "I'm excited to help deliver kits for the first time, though I don't know when that will be."

"Petalbreeze and Burnclaw seem awfully close these days." Blossompaw chuckled. "So I don't think kits are that far off."

"I hope not." Owlpaw waved her tail. "There's so much I need to learn as a medicine cat, even with the experience I have already. I want to learn all of it."

"You'll do great." Blossompaw mewed, before lowering her head. "I'll admit, I was a little sad when you changed to Honeyfrost's apprentice. I'm really happy for you, I'll just miss training with you."

"It's okay." Owlpaw nuzzled Blossompaw's cheek. "Nothing can keep

us apart anymore, even if I *am* a medicine cat apprentice. We're sisters, we will always be connected. We will always have time to hang out and spend some time together."

Blossompaw felt her heart lift at her words. "I'm excited." Blossompaw touched her muzzle to Owlpaw's forehead. "But I really do want to hear some of your stories."

"A shocking amount of them end up with me almost dying." Owlpaw licked her chest in embarrassment." *Did it really happen that often?*

"Hey Blossompaw! Owlpaw!" Blossompaw turned towards the camp entrance and saw Rushpaw and Owlpaw padding up, they had also gotten the attention of Maplepaw and Bramblepaw. "You're not telling stories with us, are you? You promised." Oakpaw flicked his tail playfully.

"I want to hear them." Maplepaw mewed eagerly.

"Alright, alright." Owlpaw cleared her throat and began, all apprentices, including Blossompaw, listened intently. "Our first day was pretty uneventful, we just travelled through a big field, but the next day was scary. We reached this thing called a park, where twolegs bring their kits and dogs to play. Seedclaw wanted to go around, but we were spotted by this brute of a dog. It started chasing us and we ran into the twolegplace. We all got separated and I ran up a tree because dogs are stupid and can't climb.

"Even though I was safe, I saw thee dog chasing Slatepaw so I climbed higher and tried breaking off a branch. The plan *was* to just have the branch fall on the dog, but I accidentally fell with it. Both me and the branch landed on the dog, knocking it to the ground then Slatepaw and I sprinted away, hiding deeper in the twolegplace. We met up with everyone else and Berryheart was wounded from a twoleg object, but I was able to heal her back up."

Blossompaw stared in awe at her sister. *She really did something like that? Little Owlpaw? The fluffy little she-cat with a constant cough?* "You must have been so brave!" Bramblepaw exclaimed. "I can't imagine being *on top* of a dog!"

"It was really scary." Owlpaw admitted.

"I would've loved to seen the look on Slatepaw's face!" Oakpaw laughed. "Imagine the big bad AshClan apprentice getting saved by my little sister!" The apprentices shared a laugh. *She really is brave.* Blossompaw thought, her mind drifting. *Could I ever be that brave?*

"Tell us another one." Rushpaw urged.

"Well, once we got back into travelling we came to a river. It was moving very fast, and we weren't sure just how easy it was to cross. I was hunting poorly so I was desperate to prove myself. I climbed a nearby tree to try and see if I could find an easy place to cross, but the branch broke under me and I fell into the river. I thought I was dead, I was so sure of it until I was pulled out of the water by a stranger. That's how I met Sheer Mountain, the leader of the new Clan. She saved my life and welcomed us into her home. You'll have to ask Earthpelt of the story of her saving me."

"Sheer Mountain seems so cool." Maplepaw noted. "She's really going to lead a new Clan."

Owlpaw nodded, her eyes showing sadness for a moment. "If everything went right, she should already have her nine lives. She'll be meeting the other leaders tonight, actually. I hope I get to go."

"I wonder how this Clan is going to fit in." Bramblepaw mewed. "It seems so strange, it's always been four Clans."

"She'll do great." Owlpaw assured everyone. "Sheer Mountain is a wonderful cat and I know she will make an incredible leader." *She seems so confident in this cat.*

"You talk awfully high of her." Rushpaw noted.

"She was my friend, she is my friend. I put a lot of work into this Clan, and I am so excited to watch them grow. I know they will become great, just as the other four Clans." *Owlpaw really admires this Sheer Mountain.* Blossompaw thought. *If Owlpaw trusts this Clan, then I do too.*

"I'm sorry, when did the medicine cat den turn into the new hot

hangout spot for lazy apprentices?" All apprentices looked up to see Pebblestep staring at them with a skeptical look in her eyes.

"Mudfall gave me permission to spend some time with Owlpaw." Blossompaw quickly explained.

"I see." Pebblestep looked to the others. "And the rest of you?"

"Sorry." Rushpaw bowed his head. "We just wanted to hear some stories from Owlpaw."

"I'm sure you did and she has many to tell, but somewhere else please." Pebblestep padded past the apprentices into the medicine cat den.

"We should probably get back to our mentors." Bramblepaw noted, looking at his sister. "But thanks for the stories, Owlpaw. I hope to hear more soon!" The two kits jumped away back to the mentors.

"Yeah, they were really great." Oakpaw nuzzled Owlpaw. "I'm so glad you're home, though. Safe and sound." He and Rushpaw turned away, leaving Owlpaw and Blossompaw alone again.

Blossompaw noticed a distant look in Owlpaw's eyes, just as she was going to question her about it, she spotted Dawnstar and Cinderflame approaching them. "Good evening, girls." Cinderflame dipped her head.

"Hi, Dawnstar." Owlpaw stood up to face her leader, as did Blossompaw. "Did you need something?"

"I did." Dawnstar mewed softly. "We are getting ready to head out to the mini gathering and I'm taking a small patrol of cats with us. Of course myself and Cinderflame, as well as all of our medicine cats, but Earthpelt is attending as well and I was wondering if Mudfall and Blossompaw wanted to join us."

"You really want me to go?" Blossompaw's eyes went wide.

"I do," Dawnstar purred. "I think it will be a good experience, and you and Owlpaw can continue to spend some time together. Earthpelt is getting Mudfall and then we will met at the entrance to

leave."

Both Blossompaw and Owlpaw agreed and Blossompaw's tail twitched in excitement. "I'm so happy." She told Owlpaw. "'I'm excited to see this leader you keep talking about."

"Me too!" Owlpaw seemed especially eager. "I wonder what her name is, I wonder what the Clan's name is. I wonder what name Cocoa and Nettle got, oh I'm so excited!" *Cocoa? Nettle?* Blossompaw had no idea which cats she was referring to, but she was glad to see her sister so excited.

With Pebblestep and Honeyfrost with them, Blosssompaw and Owlpaw met up with the others. "Are we ready?" Dawnstar checked. When every cat agreed, they set out into SunClan territory.

"So what are these cats like?" Blossompaw questioned Owlpaw.

"They're all wonderful." Owlpaw purred. "Sheer Mountain is so brave yet kind, she has a very big heart. Nettle is her deputy and she's fierce but sweet, she saved my life once. Then Cocoa is the medicine cat, she's really skittish and doubts herself but I know she will be a great medicine cat once she spends some time on her own." Blossompaw felt a twinge of envy in her belly and she wasn't sure why. *Owlpaw made a lot of friends.* Blossompaw noted. *But there's no reason to feel envious, she's still* my *sister. Nothing can take that away.*

"I was so sad to say goodbye to them." Owlpaw admitted, lowering her head. "I spent so much time with the that it was hard to leave." Blossompaw felt uneasy by Owlpaw's tone.

"It almost seems like you didn't want to leave." Blossompaw pointed out without thinking, her voice low. Owlpaw's head shot up and she shook her head.

"N-no," Owlpaw mewed quickly. "Well, I didn't, but I'm not wanting to go back." *I didn't say that.* Blossompaw pointed out to herself. "I just miss them, they were my friends. I spent a long time with them, I'll get over it soon." Owlpaw silenced herself, dropping her head. *I shouldn't have said something.* Blossompaw scolded herself.

"Sorry, Owlpaw." Blossompaw nudged her sister. "I didn't mean anything by it, I know you miss them." Blossompaw stared at her paws. "I just really missed you." Her voice trembled slightly.

"Did something happen?" Owlpaw questioned, eyes now pooled with concern. Blossompaw looked up for a moment to make sure that no one was listening to them.

"It's just--" Her voice trembled. "I keep feeling like I'm not good enough, you know? Like I'm not as good as Rushpaw or Oakpaw and it drives me mad."

"Of course I know." Owlpaw mewed sadly. "I know more than anyone what that feels like. Before I left every single cat treated me like a snowflake, like any wrong move would break me. Even now they still think that. I've had comments like: "Oh, now that you're a medicine cat you're in less danger." It's annoying and it hurts." Owlpaw brushed her tail across Blossompaw's pelt. "But I learned to not try so hard to be something I'm not. Don't work hard to become the cat you think others want you to be, work hard to become the cat *you* want to be." *The cat I want to be? What kind of cat do I want to be?* Blossompaw thought for a moment. *I want to be a warrior who protects and provides for my Clanmates. A cat others can look up to, someone who helps others.* Blossompaw felt at peace with her words. *That's what I* will *become. No matter what.*

The travelling group reached the gathering hollow and SunClan were the last to arrive among the four original Clans. "Welcome, Dawnstar." Timberstar called.

"Good evening, everyone." Dawnstar dipped her head. "Any sign of our new leader?"

Riverstar shook her head. "Not yet."

"I hope everything went alright." Owlpaw mewed quietly besides Blossompaw, her voice shaking. However, a few moments later and three figures stepped into view. It was the leader, a golden-brown she-cat and a brown she-cat.

"Sorry I'm late." The leader dipped her head. "Still trying to figure

out the territory."

"It's quite alright." Dawnstar mewed. "How did your ceremony go?"

"It went well." She lifted her head. "My name is now Mountainstar, and my Clan is MountainClan."

"That's a wonderful name." Shadowstar bowed his head. "Welcome, Mountainstar. I wish your Clan well."

"Thank you.' Mountainstar dipped her head. "Also, this is my deputy Nettleheart and my medicine cat Mothflower."

"It's an honor to meet you all." Riverstar looked over each of them. "I hope you all manage to settle in well."

"It's a hard task, but we're working through it well enough." Mountainstar looked at Owlpaw for a moment, Blossompaw noticed her sister seemed eager to talk to the leader.

"Well congratulations, Mountainstar." Timberstar purred. "Again, if you need any help. Don't hesitate to ask." The meeting was short lived and the Clans started to leave.

"Wait." Owlpaw ran up to Dawnstar. "Can I talk to Mountainstar? Just for a moment?"

"Sure, Owlpaw." Dawnstar's eyes were soft. "But don't take too long."

"I won't!" Owlpaw happily ran over to the three cats.

"Congratulations!" Owlpaw cheered. "Mountainstar is such a good name! Nettleheart and Mothflower are as well!"

"Thank you, Owlpaw." Mountainstar purred. "And what about you? Did you become a medicine cat apprentice?"

"I did! I'm Honeyfrost's apprentice now."

"Congratulations." Nettleheart mewed loudly. "You'll do great, I wouldn't even be here without you." *She wouldn't? I thought Owlpaw*

told me Nettleheart saved her *life?*

"I'll see you at the half-moon, right?" Mothflower questioned, the she-cat seemed so unsure of her own words.

"Of course! I look forward to it." Owlpaw seemed so excited to talk to them. *It's like she's talking to cats she's known her whole life.* Blossompaw noted, the early feeling of envy clawed its way back into her heart.

"Come now, Owlpaw." Dawnstar spoke up. "The new Clan leader needs to get some rest." She dipped her head. "Congratulations, Mountainstar. I look forward to seeing you at gatherings."

"You as well, Dawnstar." Mountainstar looked down at Owlpaw who seemed completely crushed. "Goodnight, Owlpaw. I will see you again soon." Blossompaw watched as her sister stared in pain as the MountainClan cats left. There was a sense of longing in her eyes. *Does Owlpaw want to be with them?* The pain struck Blossompaw like lightning, but she quickly shoved it away. *Don't be silly.* Blossompaw told herself. *Owlpaw will get over this soon, and then everything will return to normal. I just know it.*